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NEW AND OLD



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# NEW AND OLD

*A VOLUME OF VERSE*

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

AUTHOR OF

'MANY MOODS' 'RENAISSANCE IN ITALY' 'STUDIES OF GREEK POETS'  
ETC.

---

*'The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him'*

---

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1880

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TO MY FRIEND  
AMELIA B. EDWARDS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

DAVOS PLATZ

*March 1880*



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LYRICS OF LIFE AND ART.

*PART I.*

B



## *ACCENTUAL SAPPHICS.*

WHEN like dawn our Lady of Love, the deathless,  
Rose from waves that whisper around Cythera,  
She with both hands gave to the race of mortals  
Joy for a guerdon.

Stretching arms ambrosial, she divided  
All her realm of beauty to be partaken ;  
This way marriage, help, and the hope of children  
Born in the homestead.

'Then she bent dim eyes of diviner yearning  
That way o'er foam-fretted and eager ocean,  
Till from darkness, yea and the earth's foundations,  
Came a green island.

Ringed with uncontrollable storms that threaten  
Ringed with envious shoals and a tide rebellious,  
Fair it sleeps, and sirens around it alway  
Sing to the sunlight.

Here the goddess set for the souls of poets  
Their abiding place to be won with danger,  
Where for aye, unshaken and uncorrupted,  
Shines the ideal.

*TWO MOODS OF THE MIND.*

O SAD and strange this aching mood  
Of souls that yearn in solitude :  
O wild and terrible this fire  
That frets the brain with blind desire,  
Bidding me rise before the morn  
With sleepless eyes and heart forlorn,  
Driving me forth at noon or night  
To chase an unattained delight.  
I cannot rest, for still one thought  
Pursues my spirit fever-fraught;  
And what it is I scarce could say,  
Although it haunts me night and day.  
I sought to soothe this ache with song,  
But singing made my soul's thirst strong.  
I strove to quench it by the strength  
Of study ; but I tired at length  
Of seeking, learning, finding nought.  
I tried to think, but all my thought  
Still brought me to the goal whereof  
The crown I could not seize was love.  
Now at the last I know my fate,  
To weave, though worn and desolate,  
For other men a woof of light  
And hope and knowledge infinite.

Artists have nought to seek or hold  
Of mirth or perishable gold.  
For them love is not love, nor bliss  
A darling thing to clasp and kiss :  
But in their poverty and want  
Lies wealth whereof the world is scant.

While thus I mused, upon my soul there fell,  
Like the deep booming of a distant bell,  
A voice that gathered volume, cried, and said :  
' Ungrateful and oblivious of the dead !  
Hast thou forgotten all thy friends so dear,  
Painter and bard, sculptor and sage and seer,  
Who lived and wrought and suffered and have won,  
In hearts that beat, a place beyond the sun ?  
Is it so little to be named among  
The least and lowliest of that radiant throng,  
That thou must needs with fainting soul and nerve  
Enfeebled by mere longing cease to serve ?  
Up, gird thy loins : lo, the break of day !  
The stars are swallowed, Night is whirled away !'  
Then on mine eyes, where tears had swum before,  
There flashed the vision of a radiant shore,  
Embowered with laurels to the laughing seas,  
And thronged with loves and living melodies,  
Where-through I wandered, and each grief of mine  
Became a joy immortal and divine :  
I gathered fruits, and on my brows were set  
Unfading flowers with dews of Lethe wet ;

And youths that smiled and men that loved flew by,  
And not a tear was seen in any eye ;  
Yea, not one longing of my soul remained  
Unsatisfied, unslaked, or unattained ;  
For this fair region of perpetual good  
Was the dreamland of art's beatitude.

---

*LOVE IN DREAMS.*

Love hath his poppy-wreath,  
Not Night alone.  
I laid my head beneath  
Love's liliated throne :  
Then to my sleep he brought  
This anodyne—  
The flower of many a thought  
And fancy fine :  
A form, a face, no more ;  
Fairer than truth ;  
A dream from death's pale shore ;  
The soul of youth :  
A dream so dear, so deep,  
All dreams above,  
That still I pray to sleep—  
Bring Love back, Love !

---

*ICH HOR' ES SOGAR IM TRAUM.*

SING on, sing on : half dreaming still  
I hear you singing, down the hill,  
Through the greenwood, beside the rill.

Each to the other sing, sweet birds ;  
Make music sweeter far than words ;  
Drown my still soul with song, dear birds.

Under each starbeam there was sleep ;  
Far down the river wandered deep ;  
The woods closed round it still and steep.

One watch-dog from the lone farm bayed ;  
The waterfowl beneath the shade  
Of sedge and flowering reed were laid.

The birds sang on, and slumber shed  
Like silver clouds upon my head ;  
I slept, nor stirred me in my bed.

Into my room he seemed to glide ;  
The moonbeams through the window wide  
Snowed in upon my white bedside.

He kissed my lips, he kissed my cheek ;  
I could not kiss him back nor speak :  
I feared the blissful sleep to break.

Sing louder, nightingales of May !  
Sing, dash my golden dream away !  
Sing anthems to the orient day !

The moonlight pales ; the grey cock crows ;  
A murmur in the tree top goes ;  
Sleep sheds her petals like a rose.

---

*TO ONE IN HEAVEN.*

THE earth is new—it was thy love  
That made her new ;  
The heavens are new—it was thy love  
That made them new.

Now thou art gone, while I alone  
Am left to face  
The wonder of a world unknown,  
A strange blank space.

What right had Death 'twixt me and thee  
His scythe to sway ?  
He cannot teach the soul of me  
A surer way.



I want thee. Faith, hope, love are changed ;  
And I am weak :  
Old paths wherein my spirit ranged,  
I blindly seek.

Yet, friend, though thou art gone, through thee  
Mid all this new  
Maze of dim thought, dark mystery,  
I'll find the clue !

---

*FORGET ME NEVER.*

OF our great love, Parthenophil,  
This little stone abideth still  
Sole sign and token :  
I seek thee yet, and yet shall seek,  
Though faint mine eyes, my spirit weak  
With prayers unspoken.

Meanwhile, best friend of friends, do thou,  
If this the cruel fates allow  
By death's dark river,  
Among those shadowy people, drink  
No drop for me on Lethe's brink :  
Forget me never !

---

*ON THE HILL-SIDE.*

THE winds behind me in the thicket sigh,  
The bees fly droning on laborious wing,  
Pink cloudlets scarcely float across the sky,  
September stillness broods o'er everything.  
Deep peace is in my soul : I seem to hear  
Catullus murmuring ' Let us live and love ;  
Suns rise and set and fill the rolling year  
Which bears us deathward, therefore let us love ;  
Pour forth the wine of kisses, let them flow,  
And let us drink our fill before we die.'  
Hush ! in the thicket still the breezes blow ;  
Pink cloudlets sail across the azure sky ;  
The bees warp lazily on laden wing ;  
Beauty and stillness brood o'er everything.

---

*NEW LIFE, NEW LOVE.*

APRIL is in :  
New loves begin !  
Up, lovers all,  
The cuckoos call !

•

Winter is by,  
Blue shines the sky,  
Primroses blow  
Where lay cold snow:  
Then why should I  
Sit still and sigh ?

Death took my dear :  
Oh pain, oh fear !  
I know not whither,  
When flowers did wither,  
My summer love  
Flew far above.

Now must I find  
One to my mind :  
The world is wide ;  
Spring fields are pied  
With flowers for thee,  
New love, and me !

April is in :  
New loves begin !  
Up, lovers all,  
The cuckoos call !

---

*FOUR PICTURES BY BURNE JONES.*

## FORTUNE.

CAPTAINS and kings are fastened to her wheel,  
Which turns and turns : while she, close-veiled and  
blind,  
Thrusts her lean arm athwart them : head neath heel,  
And heel on head, they gasp and groan, entwined,  
A wreath of woe no mercy may unbind :  
For God who all things made, to Fortune gives  
Power to subdue the mightiest man that lives.

## FAME.

Fame stands and blows a trumpet. Chest and thigh,  
Strained with the blast, like knotted cordage quiver.  
Whence hath he flown ? From what empyrean sky  
Have those wings borne him, fiery-bright, that shiver  
Like burning towers reflected in a river ?  
Behold ! Behind him Fortune and her wheel  
Lie prone and shattered neath a naked heel.

## OBLIVION:

Thou too art strong and eagle-winged : but oh !  
How pale as death is yon broad bosom, bent

Over the restless scythe, that to and fro  
Sweeps, while the mower, on his task intent,  
Looks not to left or right. Mangled and rent  
Are Fame's fair wings ; like Fortune's wheel, his horn  
Was but a plaything for Oblivion's scorn.

LOVE.

Ah Love ! And thou hast slain him ? With what charm,  
Scattering rose-leaves on that stubborn scythe,  
Hast thou avenged the world of so much harm ?  
Oblivion neath thy smile hath ceased to writhe.  
How wert thou bold, oh, tender-limbed and lithe—  
Mere rosy-pinioned stripling—to assail  
Him before whom Fame, Fortune's lord, must quail ?

---

*DIC MIHI QUID FECI, NISI NON  
SAPIENTER AMAVI?*

A PICTURE BY BURNE JONES.

SHE leans with yearning from the enamoured tree,  
While passionate petals, shaken by her strain,  
From the frail boughs around her whiteness rain,  
Pearling with shells of rose the dewy lea :  
But he who walks thereunder, with what pain  
He feels these sudden arms enthrallingly  
Wound round his wistful heart, and knows that she

Clasps him once more, never to clasp again !  
O Love relentless ; wherefore wilt thou wring  
    This bitter-sweet of souls from their embrace ?  
Might she not bloom like other trees and fling  
    Her tearless petals in a tranquil place,  
    Nor thrust the pallid anguish of her face  
Forth to his face for fruitless sorrowing ?

---

*LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.*

SAVE us, dear lord ; for, lo, our house is waste  
    With what long strain of inexpressible woe !  
Her pure and lightsome chambers are defaced :  
    Thorned cankers in her goodly gardens blow ;  
    And the fair carven chapter lieth low.  
Pride, sweetness, splendour, all delights of life,  
Have vanished in the one grim sickening strife.

Yet save us, lord ! for should thy feet still fall  
    Upon the broken pavement, flowers would spring :  
Should thy voice through the midday darkness call,  
    Music would wake and wave her aery wing :  
    Shouldst thou but smile, we once again might sing,  
And, though we may not build, at least no more  
Break what remains of this thy house of yore.

*SPRING.*

WHITE as peeled willow-wands ableach in May  
 Are all her vestments, and her face is frail  
 As wavering wind-flowers or the scented spray  
 Of wild hedge-roses : on her head the pail  
 Foams with fresh milk ; and tufts of galingale,  
 With cowslips mingled and the pensive hue  
 Of bluebells, neath her footing shed their dew.

Singing she wends ; nor thought nor shade of care  
 Dwells on her forehead ; for the year is young :  
 Black winter dies ; and in the tranquil air  
 The promise of spring flowers, and carols sung  
 By nightingales, and the glad cuckoo's tongue,  
 Proclaim new life, and lengthening days, and nights  
 Shortened to serve for sleepless Love's delights.

*SUMMER.*

O SWEET and strange what time grey morning steals  
 Over the misty flats, and gently stirs  
 Bee-laden limes and pendulous abeles,  
 To brush the dew-bespangled gossamers  
 From meadow grasses, and beneath black firs  
 In limpid streamlets or translucent lakes  
 To bathe amid dim heron-haunted brakes !

O sweet and sumptuous at height of noon  
Languid to lie on scented summer-lawns,  
Fanned by faint breezes of the breathless June ;  
To watch the timorous and trooping fawns,  
Dappled like tenderest clouds in early dawns,  
Forth from their ferny covert glide to drink  
And cool lithe limbs beside the river's brink !

O strange and sad ere daylight disappears,  
To hear the creaking of the homeward wain,  
Drawn by its yoke of tardy-pacing steers,  
Neath honeysuckle hedge and tangled lane ;  
To breathe faint scent of roses on the wane  
By cottage doors, and watch the mellowing sky  
Fade into saffron hues insensibly !

---

### HARVEST.

THE west is purple, and a golden globe,  
Sphered with new-risen moonlight, hangs between  
The skirts of evening's amethystine robe  
And the round world bathed in the steady sheen.  
There bending o'er a sickle bright and keen,  
Rests from his long day's labour one whose eyes  
Are fixed upon the large and luminous skies :



An earnest man he seems with yellow hair,  
And yellow neath his scythe-sweep are the sheaves ;  
Much need hath he to waste the nights with care,  
Lest waking he should hear from dripping eaves  
The plash of rain, or hail among thin leaves,  
Or melancholy wailings of a wind,  
That lays broad field and furrow waste behind :

Much need hath he the live-long day to toil,  
Sweeping the golden granaries of the plain,  
Until he garner all the summer's spoil,  
And store his gaping barns with heavy grain ;  
Then will he sleep, nor heed the plash of rain,  
But with gay wassail and glad winter cheer  
Steel a stout heart against the coming year.

---

*LINES WRITTEN INSIDE A COPY OF  
PARADISE LOST.*

PLOUGHING the trough of the salt sun-dimpled Ionian  
billows,  
Under Parnassian peaks and Arcady's own Erymanthus ;  
Lying limb-length on the hills mid thyme and innocent  
eyebright,  
While overhead blue heaven was bowed like a dome on  
the mountain ;

Through resounding pines and the roar of cataracts  
    raging  
Down black beetled crags where winds incessantly  
    wrangle ;  
Thee have I read, little book, and found in thy pages the  
    music,  
Multitudinous, mighty, outpoured from the organ of  
    Milton,  
Matching the waves in their breadth, and the hills in  
    their strength, and the pinewoods  
Voiced with a thousand winds, and the wild waterfalls in  
    their volume.

---

*ANY SCULPTOR TO ANY MODEL.*

I KNOW not anything more fair than thou.—  
God give me strength to feel thee, power to speak  
Through this dumb clay and marble all the thoughts  
That rise within my spirit while I gaze !—  
What saith the Scripture ? In His image God  
Shaped man, and breathed into his nostrils breath  
Of life.—Here then, as nowhere else, shines God ;  
The Thought made flesh, the world's soul breathing soft  
And strong, not merely through those lips and eyes,  
But in each flawless limb, each mighty curve,  
Each sinew moulded on the moving form.  
Until thou camest, the world and all it held

Was even as Memnon ere he felt the sun ;  
Then Man stepped forth, the Spirit sprang to light,  
Earth found her voice and heaven with music thrilled.  
Nought is there therefore in thee but is pure,  
Perfect, compact of correspondences,  
Whereby the poems of the soul are read  
In symbols fashioned from the plastic form.  
Yea, it is mine by Art, the hierophant  
Of myriads when these moving lips are dumb,  
To find thy meaning, and to speak it forth  
Through marble and through bronze that shall not fade ;  
Making thy moulded shape—not face alone,  
But hands, breast, lifted arms, firm limbs, that tell  
Of service, strength, will, conquest, energy—  
One message for the minds of those that know.

---

*THE SINGER.*

HE fills the world with his singing,  
High notes of the heavenly morn  
For ever and ever ringing  
As age after age is born.

And then he is still, and we know not  
Whither his thoughts have fled ;  
Only the clear notes flow not,  
And we say, the singer is dead.

But the nightingales that he cherished,  
They carol and cannot die ;  
Though the man whom we loved hath perished,  
His melody throbs for aye.

---

*EYEBRIGHT.*

As a star from the sea new risen,  
As the waft of an angel's wing,  
As a lark's song heard in prison,  
As the promise of summer in spring,

She came to me through the stillness,  
The shadows that ring me round,  
The dungeon of years and illness  
Wherein my spirit is bound.

She came with her eyes love-laden,  
Her laughter of lily and rose,  
A fragile and flower-like maiden,  
In the season of frosts and snows.

She smiled and the shades departed ;  
She shone and the snows were rain ;  
And he who was frozen-hearted,  
Bloomed up into love again.

*A NOCTURNE.*

THE clouds upon the hills hold sleep ;  
 I hear the thunder of the leap  
 Of cataracts from steep to steep.

She sleeps who on my breast so long  
 Breathed, as a soft and drowsy song  
 Breathes in the brain sad thoughts among.

Yet I sleep not ; for far away,  
 Rocked only on the tide of tears,  
 In that still curtained chamber grey  
 One lies alone till break of day—

One lies who loves me, one who hears  
 The murmur of the hills alway  
 In dreams, and lives again the years  
 And longs and prays and trusts and fears.

*A FANCY.*

A CAPTIVE leaning from his tower  
 Looked forth and doted on a flower ;  
 The flower beneath his prison-bar  
 Bloomed like a bright unconscious star.

Unknown, unseen, a lover stood  
In ecstasy of solitude ;  
Before his eyes the loved one there  
Unthinking flourished free and fair.

The captive and the lover grew  
Day after day more faint of hue ;  
Day after day the girl and flower  
Put forth fresh beauties hour by hour.

---

*SORROW SONG.*

A WEST wind wailing round the eaves,  
Faint honey-dew on fading leaves,  
The perfume of a flower that cleaves  
To loosened hair :

The sobbing of a July storm,  
Dreams of a half-remembered form,  
An eagle's nest that once was warm,  
Now robbed and bare :

A wandering child that seeks her home,  
A flake of wind-tormented foam,  
Unshriven ghosts that shrieking roam  
The midnight air :

Music that dwindles on the ear,  
Dim destinies of doubtful cheer,  
Quenched orbs, and stars that disappear,  
Dead foreheads fair :

So mingled are the mists that chill  
My spirit with vague fears of ill,  
That drowse my brain and freeze my will  
With mute despair.

---

*FAREWELL.*

THOU goest : to what distant place  
Wilt thou thy sunlight carry ?  
I stay with cold and clouded face :  
How long am I to tarry ?  
Where'er thou goest, morn will be ;  
Thou leavest night and gloom to me.

The night and gloom I can but take ;  
I do not grudge thy splendour :  
Bid souls of eager men awake ;  
Be kind and bright and tender.  
Give day to other worlds ; for me  
It must suffice to dream of thee.

---

*AN ALLEGORY.*

A FLOWER I had, fairest of all that bloom,  
Dull-hued, but exquisite with faint perfume  
And shape imperial : in a vase I set  
The tender roots and frail stem delicate—  
A vase of agate, with fierce crimson stains  
And fiery blood-clots and deep purple veins  
Through palest opal flushing : to the brim  
On either side, twining with tender limb  
And hair blown into foam flakes, sorrow-sweet,  
Clung carven Nereids ; and their silver feet,  
Stayed on the broad base of the vase, their hands,  
Joined midway neath its curling lip, with bands  
Of wire-drawn gold were linked, like hers who lay  
Spray-sprent to monsters of the deep a prey.

Here planted I my flower and watched her grow,  
Veined leaf expand, and dusky petal blow  
With subtle scent indefinitely suave :  
Then with pure draughts of rain-dew did I lave  
Daily the delicate filaments that through  
Soft mould and moss their dainty juices drew ;  
Hoping that haply, ere the spring had set  
Dawnlike in summer's day, the violet  
Of those dull buds to sanguine flame might burn,  
And all my flower with fire transfigured yearn



Of hues intense and fragrance passionate :  
For, said my books, of old at Eden gate  
This flower had flaunted—yea, if warmly wooed,  
Might doff once more her weeds of widowhood :  
So wooed and waited I ; then, for that yet  
No brighter blush upon her bloom was set,  
But maidenlike and cold, for all my care,  
She drew but darkness from the ripening air,  
I from my veins let flow the ruddy tide,  
And watered her with hot heart-blood, and spied  
The crimson stream above the mosses foam  
And sink life-fraught into the thirsty loam :  
Wherefrom my plant took strength and mounted higher :—  
Yet as the days drew on no fiercer fire  
Flamed on her petals ; but green wealth of shoot  
And sappy sucker and pale purple fruit  
O'er-flowered her branches, and those sorrow-sweet  
Eyes of the carven Nereids throbbed and beat  
Pale sparks into my brain, and I more white  
Than cherry flowers in April drained the bright  
Fountains of life within my flesh, and grew  
Fainter for every shower of priceless dew  
Squandered. Ah me ! The spring to summer passed  
And summer sank to autumn ; till at last,  
Woe-wearied in my watching, crazed and spent  
With utter loss and wild bewilderment,  
I pressed the bed of fever. Earnest men  
Sustained and with kind service watched me then,  
And cool and slow and silent were the hours ;  
The while two patient eager-hearted powers,

Dim Life and fierce-eyed Death, strove for my soul.  
I nothing knew ; but in the strong control  
Of slumber fluttered like a feeble thing ;  
Till with the winnowing of his downy wing  
Death brushed my forehead and withdrew, and I  
Gazed once more conscious on the wintry sky ;  
And by my side the fair flower ever green  
Stood shorn of blossoms, and the opal sheen  
Of that carved vase mirrored a thin wan face.

Then I arising knew again the place,  
Where crazed with wilful fancy I had dreamed  
An idle dream, and my past passion seemed  
Mere madness ; for the flower, fed with pure dew,  
As erst with blood, flourished no less, but drew  
Strong draughts of life-juice for another spring  
Of soulless beauty and dull blossoming.

---

*DISAPPOINTMENT.*

Down from the hills divine the waters glide,  
From the white snow-wreaths down the mountain side,  
And in the salt sea-foam their sweetness hide.

Day after day the steady cliffs and steep  
Silently crumble like the shapes of sleep,  
And on their broken basement dreams the deep.

The clouds come sailing from the windy West  
Over the limitless blue ocean's breast,  
But in the bitter East they find no rest.

Foam-flakes of snow across the fields are blown  
Where, underneath, the sleeping grain is strown,  
And on the wold the winds of winter moan.

I left the highland of my hopes for thee,  
Downward I hurried full of love and glee,  
But in thy bosom found the barren sea.

My heart that seemed so strong to bear the blows  
Of chance and change, false friends and fated foes,  
Melts downward daily wasting with fresh woes.

Weeping I bear the freight of holy tears,  
And loving words, and hopes, and idle fears,  
And whispered sighs to thy unheeding ears.

Now hath the winter of my life begun;  
Thy blinding drifts are tossed against the sun,  
And o'er my frozen soul thy whirlwinds run.

---

*THE REJECTED SUPPLIANT.*

A PILGRIM to your shrine I came ;  
I sprinkled myrrh upon the flame—  
Myrrh of my spirit, tears and sighs,  
With eloquence of earnest eyes.

I strewed the temple-steps with flowers—  
Laughter and love and honeyed hours,  
All that my April had to yield  
From scented copse and liliated field.

I wreathed the chapel-walls with bays,  
Laurels of song and sounding praise,  
Bright burnished leaves of wit that shines  
For ever in melodious lines.

I clasped your casket round with gems,  
With moonèd pearls and coral stems,  
For which I dived into the sea  
Of azure-eyed philosophy.

Unto the altar-horns I tied  
Captives and victims—slaughtered pride—  
Poured forth the blood of years, and slew  
My hopes a holocaust for you.

Before your face I lighted fires—  
Torches of innocent desires,  
And holy humble joys that shine  
In crystal urns or opaline.

I filled the dome with chaunt and hymn,  
From lips of living cherubim—  
The fiery host of thoughts, that ne'er  
Forgot their task of praise and prayer.

Beneath your feet I made my bed ;  
Sackcloth and sand and straw I laid,  
That lying thus I still might be  
Wakeful if you should summon me.

But all was vain : no word, no sign,  
From mouth or forehead marble-fine,  
Hath sounded through the years to bless  
Your servant in his sore distress.

I waited, and I watched my prime  
Grow faint beneath the feet of time ;  
Now watch and wait no more I can,  
Lest I should cease to be a man.

Up then ! 'tis night : the temple-door  
Stands open : from the jewelled floor  
I turn : no voice recalls me : so  
Forth to the wilderness I go.

---

*MENE, MENE.*

THAT precious priceless gift, a soul  
Unto thyself surrendered whole,  
Withdrawn from all but thy control,  
Thou hast foregone.

The throne where none might sit but thou,  
The crown of love to bind thy brow,  
Glad homage paid with praise and vow,  
Thou hast foregone.

I do not blame thee utterly,  
But rather strive to pity thee,  
Remembering all the empery  
Thou hast foregone.

It was thy folly, not thy crime,  
To have contemned the call sublime,  
The realm more firm than fate or time  
Thou hast foregone.

---

*IN DREAMLAND.*

Down among the grey green shallows  
Runs a cool translucent stream,  
Rippling over pebbly shallows  
Like the Lethe of Love's dream,  
Broadening into pools of amber  
Under rocks where wild vines clamber,  
And the lilac wind-flowers gleam.

There the turf is smooth and mossy,  
Still unshorn and ever new ;  
Each young shoot and herblet glossy  
Drinks at eve the tender dew :  
For no storms assail the garden,  
Frosts nor winds the rathe leaves harden,  
And the heavens are hazy blue.

On the boughs the quinces mellow  
Mid the dim green shades above,  
Spheres of purest palest yellow  
With the scent that speaks of love ;  
Proserpine's pomegranates under  
Ripen, redden, fall asunder,  
Gem with gold the myrtle grove.

High o'er head sleep-cradled zephyrs  
Sway the bay boughs to and fro,  
Over meads where milk-white heifers  
Knee-deep in the grasses go ;  
And where'er the streamlet wanders,  
Faint-hued fragrant oleanders  
Drop their petals soft as snow.

In a dream Night led me thither,  
And I saw assembled here  
All the loves that bloom and wither  
In our gross terrestrial sphere ;

Mid the myrtles, on the meadows,  
All the joys that leave but shadows,  
All the days that disappear :

Changed to flowers and very quiet,  
Fragrant in perpetual spring,  
After life's uneasy riot  
Folded under death's broad wing,  
Gathered, garnered in a slumber  
Which no waking dreams encumber,  
Where remembrance hath no sting.



LEUKÉ.



## *LEUKÉ.*

I,

MID the bleak billows of the Euxine sea,  
In solitude and silence, far withdrawn  
From sight or sound of vexed humanity,

There sleeps the island Leuké ; on whose lawn  
Shines a white temple-front, with pillars fair,  
And porches turned to greet the ascendant dawn.

The brazen gates stand open to the air :  
'The cell lies tenantless : no human hands  
E'er touched the inmost shrine with priestly care.

But on the wind-swept, smooth, unfooted sands,  
Where wild waves lap, there dwell broad-wingèd birds  
In sweet societies and silvery bands,

With golden beaks and feathers white as curds,  
Whose prey is in the waters, and whose ear  
Hath ne'er been startled yet by mortal words.

Their task it is through the revolving year  
To tend that hero's temple : day by day,  
What time the sun's bright coursers upward steer,

Wetting their pinions in the salt sea-spray,  
With weird sea-cries and clash of circling wings,  
Up from their soft nests on the sandy bay

Like flakes of snow they flock. Each halcyon brings  
The burden of his plumage pure with brine ;  
Purges the gleaming altar ; wheels, and flings

Presents of pearls and corals on the shrine ;  
Sweeps the smooth marble walls with pinions wide,  
Striving his best to make the temple fine.—

Such charge gave Thetis to the watchful-eyed  
Brood of the bitter sea-foam, for the sake  
Of him, the hero-son, who was her pride ;

For here, 'tis said, Achilles rest will take,  
What time he wearies of the Elysian mead,  
Or spares the wild boar in the Idan brake.

Be this as this may be, it is my creed  
That Peleus' son is still a hero blest ;  
For he was fair, and born of noble breed,

And stout the lion-heart within his breast ;  
Young too he died, and divine Homer sung  
His deeds in verse that shall outlive the best :

Nay, more ! the friend to whom in life he clung,  
In death he succoured ; love so strong, so sore,  
Sustained him that the sea-queen's warning tongue  
Turned not his fleet feet from the fatal shore.

## II.

While thus I mused on Leuké, o'er my soul  
Sleep passed ; but ere boon slumber held my brain  
In deep night's irresistible control,

I blent that old-world story with the strain  
Of nearer memories : and now, methought,  
I walked with him whose love is life's great gain,

Across smooth snow-fields, and a roof was wrought  
Over our heads of rosy sunset flame,  
Wherein two lustrous lights of heaven were caught :

For lo, the thin moon and keen Hesper came  
Together mid those fiery waves, and we  
Leaped up to greet in them Love's oriflamme.

What words were ours, O friend ! How fervently  
We spake of comradeship, that lamp of love,  
Starlike descried by those who wait and see,

Firm in the faith and hope they may not prove !—  
Therefore, ere slumber seized me, memories twain  
Waved their blent plumes my drowsèd sense above.

But when thought merged in dreaming, once again  
I swept smooth waters in a trembling bark,  
Oared by six stalwart brazen-breasted men.

Late sunset paled above me ; like a spark  
Burned Hesper, darting silvery rays between  
Two wings of cloud that shook the threatening dark

From their devouring pinions ; and a green  
Island uprose to westward, lone and still,  
Where nought but one grey man was dimly seen.

Bowed as in slumber, or grief terrible ;  
Bending the weight of tawny curls upon  
His knees in-gathered to the breast, and still

Clasped by firm hands of strength, though pale and wan,  
He more than mortal slept, or seemed to sleep ;  
While on his head heaven rained full rays, and shone.

‘ Who art thou, Lord and Master ? ’ Forth did leap,  
Fledged with Greek word-wings, from my lips the cry  
That in my prescient spirit brooded deep.

Raising the wonder of his face on high  
To drink those floods of starlight, silverly  
Poured from the waning pallor of the sky,

He smiled a little space ; then looked at me :  
‘ Here, long before thy Christ was born, I dwelt ;  
Here still must bide the golden days to be :

‘ I am not dead ; I sleep not ; I have felt  
Each pulse the world’s heart made, and well I know  
How with the seed of men high God hath dealt : ’

‘ Therefore I wait ; swift years may come and go,  
But my youth cannot fade, nor my star wane :  
Yea, still I hope, and still rejoice ; for lo,

‘ The day soon cometh, when across the main  
A mighty bard forth from the West will flee  
On wings of song to set me free again :

‘ Then shall I rise like morning ; men shall see  
My beauty ; the wide world shall bless my name,  
Yielding glad homage to my Deity.’

Winged with light Greek, to me this answer came.  
Wherefore once more I strove to murmur : ‘ Lord,  
May I too help ? ’ Again he smiled, and flame

Woke in his eyes. Then from the turfy sward  
That lipped those tranquil waters, bending down,  
He plucked one purple bell divinely starred,

And tossed it to me : but, methought, a crown  
Of those same violet blossoms in his hair  
Was woven with bay leaves and myrtles brown.

Therewith his curls he shook ; and on the air  
Fell silvery syllables of vowelled Greek :

‘ Be this for thee a token ! Unaware,

‘Thou also servest, though thy sight be weak !  
My hour is not yet come ; but when that hour  
Cometh, behold I shall no longer speak

‘The tongues of buried nations !’—Here the power  
Of sleep was broken ; but I knew that he  
Was Love, who thus in dreams had talked with me.  
Wherefore I rose, and plucked of song this flower.

## III.

Thou shalt live ! Men shall call to each other :  
Behold a new star in the skies !  
Our Master, our Comrade, our Brother,  
All hail for the light of thine eyes !

For the Poet whose words are as thunder,  
Shall sail from the waves of the West,  
With melody cleaving asunder  
The blackness of night in thy breast.

He shall come when the day is ascendant,  
When the dews of the dawn are yet young ;  
From the prow of his galley resplendent  
The rays of the East shall be flung.

He shall cry to thee : Come to us, Master !  
And slumber shall fall from thine eyes ;  
The pulse in thy heart shall beat faster ;  
Yea, Love, thou shalt leap and arise !



And the words of thy message like honey  
    Shall fall from the flower of thy mouth,  
With music more sweet than the sunny  
    Dead speech of the delicate South.

Men stalwart and bearded shall listen ;  
    Young men shall rejoice in their pride ;  
And the eyes of fair striplings shall glisten,  
    While they cry to thee : Master, abide !

Come forth from thine island, and teach us  
    The truth of those excellent things,  
Whereof the strange melodies reach us  
    On world-weary musical wings !

Come forth : let the past and the present  
    Clasp hands o'er the ocean of time :  
The sun of the West is yet crescent ;  
    The year of our youth's at its prime !



AN IMPROVISATION ON  
THE VIOLIN.



*AN IMPROVISATION ON THE VIOLIN.*

SONATA QUASI UNA FANTASIA.

O HEART, false heart, why tearest thou me again ?  
May not the quick soul-fire be quenched, the fount  
Of tears be wasted in the withered eyes ?  
Are there yet men for whom my breast must bleed,  
My soul be shattered ? Ah ! most pitiless Muse !  
Am I not deaf and very old with sorrow ?

Nay, Power implacable ! I heed thee not !  
Thou, and thy steadfast eyes and wings that soar  
Straight to the centre of the sun—Forbear !  
Forbear them ! lest I perish—nay, sweet Queen !  
Lest, like some lonely pelican, I feed  
My fasting children with lifeblood and die !

Ah me ! in vain I plead ! Hark how the chords  
Come crowding—how like hammer-strokes they fall—  
The measured blows of brazen-fingered Fate,

Of brazen-footed Fate the heavy tread,  
Of brazen wings the winnowing ! Stroke on stroke,  
On the vexed anvil of my soul they throb,  
Pauseless. Did thus the Titan groan, whom Zeus  
Rove to the houseless rock and gave a prey  
To frost and fire and the sharp vulture's beak ?  
Did he thus idly wrestle ? Till the dews  
Of evening fell, and from the nether mist  
Rose maiden choirs of Oceanides  
To soothe his sorrow. Even so my soul  
Melts with melodious ministration, soothes  
Her sorrow in the solace of a song ;  
Fitfully floats upon the wings of dreaming,  
Flutters and floats. Dim faces of the past,  
Dear voices which I heard but hear no more,  
The laughter and the love of long ago,  
Sphere me with sweetness. But—ah ! woe is me !  
Again the chords come crashing ! No, no, no !  
The brazen tongue of Fate, the trumpet-tongue,  
Scornfully—through the chambers of my brain  
Blown like a crack of doom—scatters the dream,  
And slays me ! Now the trampling of swift steeds—  
Now the sharp clangour of the jarring car :—  
Where will ye whirl me ? Flames around the wheels  
Bicker, and iron hooves on flinty ways  
Strike sparks : I feel the fury of strong winds !  
Ay ! combat ; toss me down the sleety surge ;  
Sustain and slacken ; buffet me with blows ;—  
I can endure. Mid-way the stars are rolled

In azure, and the solemn night rides clear.  
I mark the billows of high hilltops laid  
Beneath me : on the dark, as on a sea,  
Forward I sail. The tumult and the din  
Die downward : but soul-terror, like a spell,  
Broods on this solitude. The leaden chords  
Fall one by one, like raindrops, when a storm  
Weeps out her last low sob and down the hills  
Draws early twilight. Hush ! what sounds are these ?  
Rustling of leaves on beechen boughs and birch  
And branches of green oak. Athwart them glides  
Clear summer sunlight, and a breeze above  
Sings summer-laden with fresh scent of flowers.  
The woodland laughs, and peeping faces peer,  
Faunlike or Satyrlike ! Even so I strayed,  
Years since, through forest-aisles, and sang ; while yet  
The hours flew not uncomforted of song,  
Nor on insensible ears this veil had fallen  
Deadening like drifted snow the feet of sound.  
Ah ! dark and lonely—very lone and dark—  
Shut out, ah me ! from human speech, my soul  
Pines like a banished thing of shame apart,  
Mourns like an orphan ! Yea, when cities ring,  
Wrought by my melodies to rapture, I,  
Their maker, through the symphonies and hymns,  
Through the triumphant trumpet-clang and wail  
Of passionate viols and pathetic flutes,  
Sit, see the tears that flow, the earnest eyes,  
The fiery souls forth-gazing—sit unmoved,

Of all those eager and impetuous crowds  
Passionless alone and cold—except for sorrow !

Yet even thus I triumph ! Even thus,  
Through silence and dark dungeon-hours unsunned,  
With thee, thou prisonless angel, soul of song,  
That seekest not for sound of pipe or flute,  
Or resonant tube, or human voice divine,  
I commune ! Thou dost visit me and wave  
Thy wings harmonious at the bars that seal  
My cell, painting with splendour the dull walls !

---

So mused the master ; while, as if in wrath,  
The vexed reverberations of his viol,  
Fitfully stricken, like a lute that lies  
Forgotten by some window-chink and bears  
The rude caresses of the wandering wind,  
Flung to the void tones dissonantly jangled,  
With here a shuddering shriek, and here a discord,  
Sharp as the rasped teeth of a rusty saw,  
Wrenched from the scarnel strings. Yet that great soul  
Lay pent within close prison walls, nor heard  
How the racked viol, like a tortured fiend,  
Made music unmelodious ; but heard  
The everlasting harmonies, and through  
The sphery regions of sidereal song  
Voyaged ; his large eyes vacant, and his brow  
Bent with its weight of curls upon the bow.



POEMS ON GREEK THEMES.



*HESPERUS AND HYMENÆUS.*

OR, THE SHEPHERD AND THE STAR.

*Sh.* HESPER, thou golden light of happy Love,  
Hesper, thou holy pride of purple eve,  
Moon among stars, but star beside the moon,  
Hail friend ! and since the young moon sets to-night  
Too soon below the mountain, trim thy lamp  
To guide me to the shepherd whom I love.  
No theft I purpose : no wayfaring man,  
Belated, would I watch and make my prey.  
Love is my goal ; and love how fair it is,  
When friend meets friend sole in the silent night,  
Thou knowest, Hesper.

*H.* Yea, indeed I know :  
Doth not this eye, immortal steadfast fire,  
Set in the dewy forehead of mild eve,  
See all things ? Listen, shepherd, and beguile  
Thy way by hearing how a god can love.

*Sh.* Speak, Hesper, I will listen ; and for this

Thy shrine shall never lack the gift of flowers  
And golden honey and sweet myrrh and wine.

*H.* It was the prime of summer, when the sheep  
Seek their deep-sheltered valleys, and the goats  
Crop bitter blossom by the barren shore :  
I, leaning from the mountain in the glow  
Of golden eve, down the long-wandering stream  
Cast my still, tremulous ray, until the rocks  
Broadened that held the rill, and made a pool  
Cold, crystal, overhung with feathery fern  
And lemon-boughs, dropping pale maiden tresses  
Star-sprent with blossoms to the nymph below.  
One nightingale, the last of all her choir,  
Thrilled in the thicket : Love, love, love, she cried,  
Pouring the passion of her lonely song.  
There my rays rested : there my influence lay ;  
And the mild nymph rose from her rocky cave  
To play upon the pool. When hush ! through the grove  
Bounding, loud singing, crowned with roses, came  
The shepherd Hymenæus, hot with wine  
From dame Demeter's banquet : the goat skin  
Flew from his shoulder, and the marble limbs,  
White, god-like, tinged with crimson, shone below  
As if a light were in them. My pale star  
Grew, palpitating, glowed beneath his gaze,  
And all the pool shimmered with living splendour.  
He leaping in was clasped in my embrace :—  
Ah, Hymenæus ! never more to be  
A simple shepherd on Thessalian hills,

To pipe and dance and shear the silly sheep,  
To sleep at noontide under murmuring pines,  
Or in the ivy-curtained cave to sing  
Sweet love-lorn ditties to dark Thestylis,  
To dwell beside the slender cypress-tree  
In that white cottage near thy native stream,  
To gaze far over olives to the sea,  
Blue, flecked with snowy sails, to climb at eve  
The withered hill-side after wandering goats,  
To live and die an unremembered swain !  
For thou wert fair !—He, floating in my arms,  
Saddened, grew sober, looked into the sky :  
The tall trees vibrated, the crystal dome  
Trembled, and all the odorous love-sick air  
Sighed in the song of the lorn nightingale ;  
Till the boy wept, yearned, longed to reach my light,  
And grew forgetful of his village home.  
Then I spoke, speaking as I speak to thee :—  
Arise, O shepherd, leave the valley lawns,  
Leave the white sheep to glimmer on the lea ;  
Rise, for my star upon the mountain dawns,  
And heaven in sapphire silence yearns for thee.  
Climb the grey crags and thread the dusk ravine  
Where filmy veils of vapour downward drop :  
My star shall guide thee, shining fair between  
The gaunt grey pines and gleaming mountain top.  
The snows of Oeta round her ledges lie,  
The stones are sharp for tender feet like thine ;  
Long is the road that scales the toilsome sky

And joins thy burning heart to love divine.  
Yet faint not, fail not : even now my lips  
Sleep pale upon the lilies of thy brow,  
And in thy steadfast eyes my starlight dips  
Her thirsty rays with thy pure light to glow.  
Arise, O shepherd, even now my beam  
Encircles thee with webs of throbbing fire ;  
From Oeta's horns I bend, and panting stream  
My godhood round thy limbs to lift thee higher.  
Dead is the day ; his rosy lips are cold ;  
And yellow all the tracts of pathless snow :  
My star alone, in lucid amber rolled,  
Gleams to thy valley ghostly grey below.  
Now is my hour. My lamp of love in heaven  
Flames yet before night's tardy trampling steed,  
And, ere the stars flash forth, to me is given  
Power o'er the air my wingèd wish to speed.  
So thou art mine ; and when I sink below  
The luminous edges of yon western cloud,  
Thou too shalt pass, and in my empire know  
The joy that makes the starry circles loud.  
Swathed in my arms thy youthful limbs shall steam  
With light as hills with vapour, and thy hair,  
Bright as a phosphorous meteor, far shall seem  
To spread a trailing glory through the air :  
And men shall say, Behold yon wondrous sight—  
A youth—a cloud of brightness—on the bar  
Of sunset, lo, he stands, and in the light  
Of Hesper trembles with the trembling star.

I ceased, and heaven was silent. From the stream  
My light had faded : one by one the stars  
Flushed into brightness ; but behind the hills  
Glimmering I rested. By the darkened pool  
Sad Hymenæus, pale and startled, threw  
Wild wondering upward arms and eager eyes  
To the cold, cloven, unrelenting horns ;  
Then sighed, and ceasing not his steadfast gaze,  
All night he travelled, all next day he rose  
Beneath the calm brows of the journeying sun ;  
But, when eve drew her dusky veil, he stood,  
Forehead to forehead, breast to breast, with me—  
With me the god, clad in my silver glory—  
And earth lay low beneath him. Shepherd, stay !  
There is a land behind the western cloud,  
A low deep meadow land of ceaseless spring  
And everlasting twilight : olives there  
Shed a perpetual shade of softened lustre  
Like woven light on the green grass below ;  
Where foam-white asphodels, tall milky blossoms,  
Shimmer with interchange of hyacinth,  
Blood-red anemone, and faint narcissus ;  
And the blue violet strays in sweet tangles,  
Seen and unseen, by pool and running brook,  
Lulling the sense with fragrance ; while a song  
Rocks in the odorous height of spreading pine  
And spiry cypress and aerial palm.  
There Hymenæus dwells with me, what time  
We rest from roaming the star-spangled sky.

There all good lovers, after toilsome life,  
Lie raimented with everlasting youth.  
And thee, too, shepherd, we will welcome there,  
If to young Myrtilus thy faith thou keep :  
For this is virtue, when a friend with friend  
Linked in strong bonds of union, lets the years  
Flow over them unheeded, sees the flower  
Of boyhood perish, and man's strength appear,  
Yet alters not, but grows in tenderness  
And mutual reverence and equal love ;  
Till the grey-bearded village sires approve,  
Nodding their heads, and cry, the age of gold  
Comes round again when lovers thus can lead  
Pure wedded lives of Achilleian honour.

*S/z.* Thanks, Hesper, the long mountain path is  
done ;

The cypress shivers by the shepherd's door ;  
And thou art near thy setting : thanks to thee,  
Hesper, of all true lovers guide and friend,  
Thyself of lovers chief among the gods.

---



*THE FEET OF THE BELOVED.*

*ῥυθμοὶ ποδῶν φιλτάτων.*

FEAR not to tread ; it is not much  
 To bless the meadow with your touch :  
 Nay, walk unshod ; for, as you pass,  
 The dust will take your feet like grass.  
 O dearest melodies, O beat  
 Of musically moving feet !  
 Stars that have fallen from the sky  
 To sparkle where you let them lie ;  
 Blossoms, a new and heavenly birth,  
 Rocked on the nourishing breast of earth ;  
 Dews that on leaf and petal fling  
 Multitudinous quivering ;  
 Winged loves with light and laughter crowned ;  
 Kind kisses pressed upon the ground !

---

*FROM MAXIMUS TYRIUS.*

I.

A GOODLY form thou seest, a face in bloom,  
 And limbs that bear the bud of ripening days ;  
 Touch not, corrupt not ; spare the faint perfume ;  
 Pass like a wayfarer with honest praise,  
 Who sees by some fair shrine the palm upraise

Her tender shaft ; and leaves the shoot to be  
For Phœbus or for Zeus a stately tree.

## II.

O for the arrows and the bows of eyes !  
No Syrian and no Parthian and no Mede  
Shoots as Love shoots from those crystalline skies.  
O for the wings of words, the windy speed  
Of sighs that bear him like a flying steed !  
Now on the threshold of thy soul he stands :  
Wilt thou gainsay his will with praying hands ?

## III.

With fate and fear and forceful sovereignty  
Love wagemeth bitter war ; for he is wild,  
Untameable, and proud, and very free ;  
Of fire and air the lightning-wingèd child ;  
Fierce to his foemen, to his servants mild ;  
Not to be bought with gold or land or fee,  
But found unsought by souls as strong as he.

## IV.

For wealth Love cares not, nor no tyrant fears ;  
He smiles at swellings of the perilous seas ;  
Before his face eternal spring appears ;  
He threads the woods and pathless wilds with ease ;  
He shuns not what men shun—fire, death, disease ;  
Nor what men troublous find, can trouble him ;  
No length of days shall make his radiance dim.

*AN EPISODE.*

PHÆDO, AN OLD MAN, AT HIS FARM IN ELIS, SPEAKS.

‘OH, Phaidon, Phaidon!’—Years since then have flown,  
 Athenian guest, and I who speak was young.—  
 Yet still, ‘Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!’ here within,  
 The clear kind voice is ringing.—It was noon ;  
 But I face-downward in the accursèd den  
 Lay bowed with grief, while for a veil this hair,  
 Then golden and unshorn, o’er cheeks and eyes  
 Rained in the sunlight of the opening door.—  
 ‘Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!’—That was all he said :  
 But there was something in the tone so pure,  
 So tender, yet withal so subtly blent  
 With laughter rippling from a deep strong soul,  
 As though the man who spoke dared smile at sin,  
 That well I knew those words meant help, meant love,  
 Deliverance, sunrise, hope and health once more.—  
 You know what followed?—Yes? you know he lay  
 And stroked these same long curls until he died?—  
 ‘Oh, Phaidon, Phaidon!’—That was all ; but all  
 Was in those words, and when I die, methinks  
 My soul will hear them from his lips in heaven.

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*TO RHODOCLEIA.*

To thee whose name and fame are of roses,  
Fair Rhodocleia, this wreath from me  
Shall speak of youth when the bloom uncloses,  
And speak of death and the days to be.

Here is narcissus the rathe rain-lover,  
And here are wavering wind-flowers frail,  
And here are roses that wreathe and cover  
The foreheads of men by love made pale;

Violets blue as the veins that wander  
O'er breasts we love when we dream Love true,  
And lilies that laugh to the sunlight yonder  
On meadows drenched with the morning dew.

But when this crown on thy brow reposes,  
Learn from the blossoms, and be not vain ;  
For time fades thee, as he fades the roses ;  
Nor they nor thou may revive again.

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*AT DIOCLES' TOMB AT MEGARA.*

THESE offerings to thy tomb I bring ;  
These curls upon the flames I fling :  
True tears, and curls, of youth the pride ;  
Justments for one who nobly died.

Friend, comrade, slain in fight for me !  
How can I live to honour thee ?  
What office that the shades allow  
Dare I perform to please thee now ?

Alas ! thine ear is cold, thine eyes  
Are shrouded from the blithesome skies ;  
By Lethe's stream thou liest low  
Mid the tall poppy-stems arow.

A little dust, a brazen urn,  
A mound bedecked with fringed fern,  
Mid olive avenues so grey  
They seem to blunt the shafts of day ;—

This then is all that's left of thee,  
Who wast the light of life to me !  
Thou canst not hear, thou wilt not rise,  
Nor see the tears that dim these eyes.

I ne'er shall take at eventide  
Sweet counsel, walking by thy side ;  
Ne'er clasp thy hand, nor wake and say  
' Friend, art thou there ? ' at break of day.

Farewell ! Farewell ! That chilly word,  
Blown back upon my lips unheard,  
Is far more sad than thy last cry—  
' Dear heart ! be glad although I die.'

*THE SACRIFICE.*

## A FRAGMENT.

DAWN whitened—for it was midsummer dawn—  
O'er dim Pentelicus. The sleep that lay  
On those two lovers, melted like a mist,  
Leaving their spirits bare beneath the skies  
Of lofty purpose. Nor to flinch or fail  
Was theirs. But, having bathed pure limbs, they stepped  
Into the stirless city-streets ; the arm  
Of brave Cratinus round the sinewy girth  
Of his tall comrade twining. So they moved ;  
And morning grew around them, with a press  
And pulse of coming glory, ever more  
Flame-pure from base to zenith of clear skies ;  
Till by the cell of Epimenides  
Standing, they saw the golden face upraised  
Of Phœbus ; and the pale priest welcomed them  
With : ' Hail, thrice hail ! beloved of heaven, the sons  
Of Athens, and her saviours, who have dared  
Thus in her sorest need, at price of pain  
And laughter lost in death, to purchase honour !  
Assume the robe of sacrifice : the crown  
Of innocent flowers, for you by fate foreseen,  
On locks of youth and manhood's crispy curls  
Lay joyfully : for lo, the elders sound,—

Hark, in the porches and the paths beneath,—  
 Your triumph, and a breathless people throngs  
 The marble temple-steps to greet with blessings  
 Their heroes !' They as in a dream beheld  
 The lengthening light, which ne'er for them should flame  
 To noon ; the sweet Ionian vowels heard  
 Of youths and maids ; the loved warm life within  
 Drank, dying. Then the long procession moved  
 Around them—earnest eyes, and sobs, and feet  
 That faltered on the pavement ; praying men,  
 And tearful women ; music, and the scent  
 Of summer morning ; bees that drowsily  
 Flew by with honey-burden of full hives ;  
 All dear familiar things transformed and hallowed ;  
 The awful shrine, the altar, and the knife !—  
 Thus, as they lay, and death drew near, a sound  
 Swelled in their ears of singing, and they slept.

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ART IS LOVE.

SCENE : *The Lesche at Delphi.*

*Speakers* : POLYGNOTUS *the Painter, and* THERON, *Tyrant*  
*of Agrigentum.*

*Ther.* Teach me, friend Polygnotus, what is Art.

*Pol.* This craft of mine, sire ; that of Pheidias ;  
 Or that of Damon or the Theban lyrist.

*Ther.* Nay, but I asked thee not to tell the tale  
Of men and of their labours. Prithee, say  
What power is it that works in thee and them  
Compelling worship.

*Pol.* Haply 'tis some god.

*Ther.* Ay, Polygnotus : but what god ? We see  
Thought, skill, strength, passion, industry that makes  
Men like to gods in labour, for no end  
Of use or profit spent, but to delight  
The soul with shadows of her highest striving ;  
The fruit whereof is art. What thing then is it  
Which without service of man's need is set  
As the high goal whereto man's spirit striveth ?

*Pol.* I am, O king, a craftsman, skilled to make,  
Unskilled to speak : yet listen ; Art is Love.

*Ther.* Love, sayest thou ? Love, who from the clash  
of things  
Created order, or that laughing boy  
Who sleeps on cheeks of maidens and of youths  
Drowned in day-dreaming ?

*Pol.* Yea, 'tis Love I mean :  
But of his lineage I would have you learn  
What poets have kept hidden. They pretend  
Love is a god, young, fair, desirable,  
Fulfilled of sweetness and self-satisfied,  
Treading the smooth paths of luxurious spirits.  
Not thus I know him ; for, methinks, he hungers  
Full oftentimes and thirsts, yearning to clasp  
The softness, tenderness, and grace he hath not.



He was begotten, as old prophets tell me,  
At the birth-feast of Beauty by a slave,  
Invention, on a beggar, Poverty ;  
Therefore he serves all fair things, and doth hold  
From his dame nothing, from his father wit  
Whate'er he lacks to win.

*Ther.* You speak in riddles :  
Not thus have Hesiod and blind Homer sung him.

*Pol.* Nathless 'tis true : and Art, whereby men mould  
Bronze into breathing limbs, or round these lines  
With hues delusive, or join verse to verse,  
Or wed close-married sounds in hymn and chorus,  
Is Love ; poor Love that lacks, strong Love that conquers ;  
Love like a tempest bending to his will  
The heart and brain and sinews of the maker,  
Who, having nought, seeks all, and hath by seeking.  
Look now : the artist is not soft or young,  
Supple or sleek as girls and athletes are,  
But blind like Homer, like Hephaistos lame.  
True child of Poverty, he feels how scant  
Is the world round him ; and he fain would fashion  
A fairer world for his free soul to breathe in.  
The strife between what is and what he covets,  
Stings him to yearning ; till his father, Craft,  
Cries—stretch thy hand forth, take thy fill, and furnish  
Thy craving soul with all for which she clamours.

*Ther.* Is it so easy then to win the prize  
You artists play for ? I, a king, find Love  
A hard task-master.

*Pol.*

Ay, and so is Art.

Many a painter through the long night watches  
Till frozen day-spring hath lain tired with waiting  
At his dream's door-step, watering the porch  
With tears, suspending rose-wreaths from the lintel,  
Thrice blest if but the form he woos be willing  
To kiss his cold lips in the blush of morning.  
And though that kiss be given, even then,  
Mid that supreme beatitude, there lingers  
An aching want—a sense of something missed—  
Secluded, cloud-involved, and unattained—  
The melody that neither flute nor lyre,  
Through breath of maidens or sharp smitten strings,  
Hath rendered. See how Art is like to Love !  
For lovers, though they mingle, though close lips  
To lips be wedded, hair with streaming hair  
And limb with straining limb be interwoven,  
Yet are their souls divided ; yet their flesh  
Aches separate and unassuaged, desiring  
What none shall win, that supreme touch whereby  
Of two be made one being. Even so  
In art we clasp the shape imperishable  
Of beauty, clasp and kiss and cling and quiver ;  
While, far withdrawn, the final full fruition,  
The melting of our spirit in the shape  
She woos, still waits :—a want no words can fathom.  
Thus Art is Love. And, prithee, when was lover  
Or artist owner of fat lands and rents ?  
Poor are they both and prodigal ; yet mighty ;

And both must suffer.—I have heard, O king,  
 The pearls your mistress wears upon her sleeve,  
 Are but the product of an oyster's pain.  
 Between its two great shells the creature lies  
 Storing up strength and careless, till a thorn  
 Driven by deft fingers probes the hinge that joins  
 Well-fitting wall to wall ; the poor fish pines,  
 Writhes, pours thin ichor forth, and well nigh drains  
 His substance : when at last the wound is healed,  
 A pearl lurks glistening in the piercèd shell.  
 See now your artist : were there no quick pain,  
 How should the life-blood of his heart be given  
 To make those pearls called poems, pictures, statue ?  
*Ther.* Are lovers oysters then as well as artists ?—  
 Nay, prithee, brook the jest ! I take your meaning.

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MARTYRDOM.

DID I not tell you so, and cry :  
 ‘Rash soul, by Kupris, you’ll be caught !  
 Ah, luckless soul, why will you fly  
 So near the toils that Love had wrought ?’

Did I not warn you ? Now the net  
 Has tangled you, and in the string  
 You vainly strive, for Love hath set  
 And bound your pinions, wing to wing ;

And placed you on the flames to pine,  
And rubbed with myrrh your panting lip,  
And when you thirsted given you wine  
Of hot and bitter tears to sip.

Ah, weary soul, fordone with pain !  
Now in the fire you burn, and now  
Take respite for a while again,  
Draw better breath and cool your brow !

Why weep and wail ? What time you first  
Sheltered wild Love within your breast,  
Did you not know the boy you nursed  
Would prove a false and cruel guest ?

Did you not know ? See, now he pays  
The guerdon of your fostering care  
With fire that on the spirit preys,  
Mixed with cold snow-flakes of despair !

You chose your lot. Then cease to weep :  
Endure this torment : tame your will :  
Remember, what you sowed, you reap :  
And, though it burns, 'tis honey still !

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## PANTARKES.

*The Temple of Zeus at Olympia.*

PHEIDIAS seated before his nearly finished Statue : the youth PANTARKES beside him. Both are looking at ZEUS and at the Statue of Victory, a portrait of PANTARKES, between the god's knees. PHEIDIAS speaks.

WHO made that mythus of eternal youth ?—  
Perchance it means but what I give to thee,  
Pantarkes ! Not young life in simple sooth,

But lifeless life for perpetuity  
Congealed in marble. This at least shall last  
When thou to dust art rendered utterly :

Thy very self, the truth of what thou wast,  
The thought, the form, the beauty that imbued  
Thy substance with divinity, and cast

In mortal mould a god's similitude.—  
Strange that thy thought should live, thy type endure,  
When thou art nought ; that gods have set this feud

'Twixt perishable flesh and spirit pure ;  
That man in combat with unconquered power  
Can make at least the form he loves secure,

When life and what he clings to—the frail flower  
Of limbs that bloom, and eyes that answer, lips  
That render kisses—these are Hades' dower !

Cold life in stone is Phœbus in eclipse,  
The ring and rondure of a shrunken sun,  
A darkened disc touched by death's finger-tips.

Well ! I have wrought what best availed ; have won  
This much of life undying, deathless name,  
For thee, my chosen. Victors, one by one,

Shall sue thee and shall crown thee ! for their fame  
Flows from thy gift : thou, stationed at the knee  
Of Zeus, enringed with radiant altar flame,

Shalt stand for symbol of that Victory  
That signs the years of Hellas. Well I ween  
An ample orb of awful empery

Awaits my Thunderer ; and thou between  
His knees Olympian, like a palm that springs  
Skyward through chasms of the cleft ravine,

Shalt tempt all eyes with lustre ; these thy wings  
Shall winnow souls, when eyes are over-worn  
With gazing at that grandeur of the king's

Impendent eyebrows.—Lo, his fearful scorn,  
His terrible fixed forehead, stern and strong !—  
From black-browed night to rosy-dimpled morn

We turn for solace. So to thee we turn  
From Zeus Olympian. Will they dream, I wonder,  
Those men in days unborn, who come to burn

Beneath thy beauty, when they melt thereunder,  
That I who carved thee, loved thee ; filled thy splendour  
As full with living love as Zeus with thunder ;

That in thy sculptured form I do but render  
The mute insensible melodies of thee,  
Thy lore of loveliness divinely tender ?

Nay, God alone is Demiurge. To me  
He gave a little skill, a wavering hand,  
Sometime obedient to the brain. But He

Himself made thee. What form profoundly planned,  
What abstract of all beauty, what supreme  
Essence of true proportion pure and grand,

The very substance of a sculptor's dream,  
Dare stand by thee, thy simple self, the youth  
Who mid the olives by Alphæus' stream

Bared breast and shoulder ? No : the naked truth  
Of such as thou art, fools our soaring skill.  
We do our best ; our best remains uncouth,

Compact of error. On their holy hill  
How laugh the gods to see these apes, these men,  
Vainly Promethean, while their puppets fill

The stage of earth with radiance that escapes  
From life like lightning, in a myriad modes  
Breathing and moving. Shadows, frozen shapes,

Phantoms, pale corpses from their cold abodes  
Evoked to stare in marble ; these our craft  
Can bungle. Better were it to write odes,

Like Pindar hymning thee ; on words to waft  
Thy melodies adown the windy ways  
Of deathless generations ; wing some shaft

Of song with burning pinions of thy praise,  
And smite the souls of nations ! Hearing him,  
What lover but would crown, for thee, with bays

The boy beside him ? So thy fame should brim  
An everlasting goblet of new wine  
Outpoured by hearts elate, and ne'er grow dim.

Well : each man hath his mastery.—This is mine.—  
Pindar perchance might envy me ; for love,  
Inordinate of appetite, doth pine

For all the gifts that gods can give, to prove  
By prodigality how vast the sea  
Unsearchable o'er which his pinions move.

Behold, Pantarkes ! I have sculptured thee  
Even as I saw thee first that summer-time,  
When thou wert chosen from the boys to be



Monarch of beauty in thine April prime.  
Here in my statue are those lifted arms,  
Those bending brows, that slender form sublime !

My art hath added nought. These vulgar charms  
Of gold and ivory obscure and shroud  
The sun that shining from thy forehead warms

The soul of poets !—I am old and bowed  
With years, with labours ; thou too, thou shalt fail  
And fade and pass within death's icy cloud :

Therefore my skill some trifle must avail  
To save a fragment from death's tyrannous jaw.—  
Alas for youth, so fair, so phantom-frail !

Alas for that wide unappeasable maw  
That yawns for men, for all things ! Some few years,  
Some little space, I stand above the law,

And shield thee. Then we perish—Truce to tears :  
The fiery heart of lovers hath great scorn  
Of fate and fortune. Haply mid the spheres,

Whereof they speak in mysteries, are born  
Men ever fair and ageless. Let that be.—  
Methought in dreams I wrestled yester-morn,

A greybeard, with a youngster, I with thee :  
I stumbled and was bound, a bruised man,  
Thy captive glorying in captivity.

This is a parable which I will plan,  
For men of after-time to muse upon,  
In Parian marble or Pentelican.

Now let us rise. The sun that erewhile shone,  
Glistening from beaten gold and bearded breast  
Of Zeus, slants sea-ward. Honey-pale and wan

Are all the polished ivory brows that rest  
Their weight of thought around the Thunderer's throne.  
Fain would I gaze far out into the west

From some bare mountain-summit. Go, my son ;  
Leave me awhile to wander. Ere midnight  
Seek me beside the solitary stone  
That knows the secret of my soul's delight.

THE LOVE TALE OF ODATIS  
AND  
PRINCE ZARIADRES.



### *THE DREAM OF ODATIS.*

ODATIS, daughter of the Scythian king,  
Lay in her ivory chamber wondering  
What pleasant sight the morrow's sun would bear  
To make the April of her life more fair.  
Then as she thought thereon her lashes fell  
Over her grey eyes, and she slumbered well ;  
Nor dreamed therewith ; but when the moon outworn  
Waned on the pearly limits of the morn,  
Then through her sleep the flocks of dreams like rain  
Fell on her troubled sense and stirred her brain.  
And first through many a twilight labyrinth  
Of starry wind-flower and wild hyacinth  
Listless she wandered, and the heaven o'erhead  
Was to her soul a prison blank and dead ;  
Nor heard she sound of song, nor was the earth  
For all the brightness of its bloomy birth  
Glad to her eyes ; but all she looked upon  
Seemed as the face of one with sorrow wan.  
Yet even so the vision changed : the wood  
Faded from out her memory, and she stood

In purple princely splendour throned on high  
To watch the pomp of armies marching by ;  
And in her breast her heart leaped, for the show  
Filled her with trembling such as lovers know.  
And first came youths upon the flowery way  
Thick strewn with silk and boughs of conquering bay ;  
Garlands they wore of violets, and their eyes  
Sparkled like stars that stud December skies,  
While with puffed cheeks and lips whereon the down  
Of boyhood lingered, through the startled town  
They blew the silver sound of clarions wreathed  
Into strange circles serpentine, or breathed  
Through flutes melodious heraldings whereby  
Trembling the maiden felt that Love was nigh.  
Nor might she pause to think ; for now the tread  
Of elephants with vine leaves garlanded  
Went crushing blossoms with huge feet ; their grey  
Lithe trunks were curled to snuff the scents of May,  
And on their castled backs and shoulders vast  
Flamed cressets ; on the live coals negroes cast  
Spices of myrrh and frankincense, and boys  
Like naked Cupids made a merry noise  
Swinging from flank and dewlap, showering spray  
Of cakes and comfits from gilt quivers gay.  
Next came the priests, entoning as they went  
Praises and prayers—their dusky foreheads bent  
Beneath the weight of mitres stiff with gems ;  
And on their breasts and on the broidered hems  
Of their loose raiment glittered runes that none

Might read, so far ago in ages gone  
By men whose very memories are flown  
Were those strange legends wrought in tongues unknown.  
Behind them followed oxen white as snow,  
Large-limbed, with meek eyes wild and round and slow;  
Lowing they went, and girls beside them held  
Red rosewreaths on their necks and shoulders belled  
With golden bubbles. After, in long line,  
Passed princely youths on horses ; red as wine  
Was all their raiment, and the steeds they rode  
Like thunder-clouds in tawny splendour glowed.  
Ah ! then she trembled ! on her soul there fell  
Even in dreams a swift fire terrible !  
For towering o'er the brows of all that band,  
Throned on a car, guiding great steeds, did stand  
One who with fixed eyes gazed on only her :  
And as he drew anigh, still goodlier  
Than all those youths he shone ; and still more near,  
Her spirit shivered with delicious fear ;  
For on her face his eyes stayed, and his breast,  
Whiter than moonlight, heaved with wild unrest ;  
And all about his brows and glorious eyes  
The golden tresses gleamed like live sunrise ;  
And as at last beneath her seat he came,  
She heard the heralds shout an unknown name—  
Prince Zariadres !—and he rose, and she  
Dared not or could not shrink, for utterly  
Her soul with love was shattered, and his mouth,  
Panting, half open, dry with eager drowth,

Disclosed beneath her lips ; and so it seemed  
 That even as she struggled and still dreamed,  
 That show and all those sights faded, and he  
 With strong arms clasping strained her stormfully  
 To his broad bosom.—Then she woke, and wan  
 With joy, still felt his living mouth upon  
 Her quivering lips ; and lo ! the dream was gone !

Afar across the steppes and rolling sea  
 Of grassy waves the sun rose royally,  
 Shooting his shafts aloft and stirring all  
 Glad creatures to the new day's festival.  
 But on her couch Odatis lingered ; still  
 Within her bosom heaved her heart, and shrill  
 To her tense ears sounded the faint lark's song :  
 Nor knew she well thus lying how the long  
 Minutes crept over her, for she was fain  
 To hoard the fragments of her dream, and pain  
 Troubled her heart for thought that day must be  
 Unsunned by that brief night's felicity.  
 Then came her maidens to her, they who grew  
 Around her youth as lilies white and blue  
 Bloom round the queen rose, and they bade her rise,  
 Saying : the sun rides high in the mid skies.

So she arose ; and on her cheek the flush  
 Was as the bloom of roses when they blush  
 In summer sunset : sandalled then and clad  
 In silks whereof the pearly sheen displayed



Hues like the hearts of opals, blue and red  
Mingling with subtly woven silver thread,  
Forth to the close she fared, where by a rill  
The grass was strewn with wind-stirred daffodil  
And pale narcissus ; apple trees o'erhead  
Their lichen-hoary twisted branches spread,  
And at their feet flowered violets: there the sod  
Was very soft and smooth, by sandals trod  
Of sauntering maidens, swept by silken trains,  
And kindly nursed by gentle April rains—  
An unshorn meadow sward, whereon at play  
Odatis with her virgins passed the day.  
There tales were told and shrill songs sung whereof  
The one recurring burden still was love :  
Yet was Odatis sad, and none might stir  
With jest or smile the cloud that troubled her,  
Nor would she weave the dance or throw the ball,  
But mute and pensive, in despite of all  
The innocent wiles of maiden wooings, lay  
As though she recked not of the sweet spring day.  
Then when noon wore at length to dewy eve,  
And tired with sport those damsels fain would leave  
Their garden for the houseroof, from her bed  
Of grass and flowers Odatis leaned and said :

‘O, tell me, maidens, what mysterious thing  
Hath stirred my spirit with strange quivering !  
I slept ; I dreamed ; and lo ! the morrow seems  
A sad sweet echo of melodious dreams.

Still in mine eyes a face burns, and a cry  
 Of words I know not throbs and passes by.  
 I start, I blush, I tremble, I desire—  
 New joys untasted with a secret fire  
 Consume me, so that all that heretofore  
 I loved flits phantomlike on a far shore,  
 And what I love not, know not, cannot tell,  
 Allures and frets me with a steady spell.  
 I am undone with sweetness—fain would fly  
 Far off into yon spheres of saffron sky  
 And perish—ah ! not perish—not alone—  
 I know not what I say, what breath upon  
 My lips e'en now hath fallen, what soft thrill  
 Bids me abide and yearn and languish still—  
 For nothing ? or for what ?—dear maidens, say  
 Why seems it to me that a single day  
 Hath set between that shore of life and this  
 Waves ruder than the rush of Tanais ?'

'Thou hast felt Love in Sleep : he still is fain  
 To whisper music to a slumbering brain.'  
 'Love ! what is Love ? To be fantastical  
 For forms and phantoms—on my knees to fall  
 And pray kind sleep to take my soul and give  
 One long delicious dream, that I may live  
 Mid unsubstantial shadows—to turn pale,  
 To flush, to throb, to faint, to sigh, to quail,  
 To glow in ice, to freeze in fire, to hate  
 The light of day and all things delicate

That are not dreams—oh ! is this Love ? I thought  
That Love was something sure and steady wrought  
Into the very heaven of life, and set  
Mid stars the soul shall nevermore forget !  
Is he a thing of visions ?

‘Nay,’ cried she,  
The girl whom maidens called Earinè,  
‘I know not Love ; I dream not ; yet I know  
By words that fall upon the ear like snow  
On sleepy house roofs, by faint flower-scent,  
By songs of birds with lustrous twilight blent,  
By heavy-headed roses, and wide eyes  
Of young men gazing in a still surprise,  
By tremblings when a hand upon my hand  
Lingers and mute lips quiver and feet stand  
Fixed in unwilling wilfulness to stay  
As though they fain would stir not night or day,—  
Surely by signs and tokens like to these  
I know Love is some subtle sweet disease,  
Some fire that frets and soothes, some frost that chills  
And stings the spirit with delicious thrills.  
And thou too lovest ; doubt not, thou hast seen,  
I thou the simple truth wouldst tell, fair queen,  
In sleep some god who wooed thee ! Wait and be  
Cradled in honey-sweet expectancy :  
For surely like a mist of golden rain  
Or dew descending, he will come again ;  
And by thy side perchance, no more a shade,  
The very life of Cupid shall be laid,

As erst by Psyche's ere she dared to see  
 What Love would hide from dull mortality.'

'So be it !' sighed Odatis. Then she wen  
 For now the skirts of night were starry sprent,  
 Forth to her chamber, and but little slept,  
 For still her heart sweet bitter converse kept.

*THE DREAM OF ZARIADRES.*

The selfsame night Odatis dreamed her dream,  
 Prince Zariadres by the silver stream  
 Choaspes slept : far down the stainless tide  
 Mid flowering reeds and fragrant rushes sighed ;  
 And o'er the open window its broad roof  
 An immemorial cedar spread moon-proof,  
 Where nestled nightingales and where the shine  
 Like live fire went of clematis and vine.  
 Asleep he lay—the seed, so story ran,  
 Of Aphrodite and no mortal man  
 But mystic Thammuz ; yea, his cheek and chin,  
 Whereon the golden down of youth was thin,  
 And his fierce eyes and amorous spake him sprung  
 Of gods immortal since the world was young.  
 Asleep he lay : the cedar planks whereof  
 The walls were wrought, were carved with tales of love ;  
 And on the marble floor thick quilted fur  
 Slumbered, brown sable and rare minever.

Thereon huge hounds of chase lay curled, and bright  
Beside his pillow in the dim starlight  
Shone hunting spear and broad blade and such gear  
As woodmen don to drive the flying deer.  
But Zariadres sleeping dreamed not yet  
Of horn or hound or thicket boar-beset ;  
Nay, nothing dreamed ; until what time the light  
Of dawn upon the ocean edge was white,  
Dame Venus, so his dream ran, filled the house  
With pleasant sounds and flower-scents amorous.  
Then as he lay and listened, lo ! the beat  
Of rhythmically moving maiden feet  
Fell on his ear, and laughter grew, and wide  
His chamber door flew open, and the tide  
Of lute and viol wavelike filled the room  
With music married to the wild perfume  
Of virgin voices ; and while still the sea  
Of gathering gaining golden melody  
O'erflowed his senses, by the bed there stood  
Dame Venus—as erewhile in mocking mood  
From wavelets Cytherean and white foam  
Naked she rose beneath heaven's azure dome,  
So by his bedside smiling with strange wiles  
Hid in the subtle dimplings of her smiles,  
Stayed she ; and roses like a ruddy mist,  
With violets deep and dim as amethyst,  
Rained round her : then from forth the flowers there  
shone—  
As from pink clouds the sunk sun smiles upon,

Love's white star shines—a trembling maiden, clad  
 In splendour of such light the lilies had  
 In Eden ; and the youth who looked at her,  
 Felt the still fountains of his spirit stir  
 With some new bliss untasted. Venus cried :  
 ' Behold, O Zariadres ! 'tis thy bride,  
 Odatis, daughter of a race of kings,  
 Thy mother to thy breast in slumber brings !  
 Arise, and clasp her ! '

Then he rose and flung

His arms around the shade and clasped and clung.  
 Ah me ! the treachery of dreams ! Sleep flies,  
 And straining wide expectant eager eyes,  
 Whose lips are these with thirsty lips he kisses  
 As though he would uproot their blooming blisses ?  
 Poor Zaffir, foster-brother, page, with whom  
 He beats the thicket side from dawn till gloom,  
 Stands in his locked arms, wondering, laughing, cool,  
 With crisp curls dripping from the crystal pool,  
 Where he has bathed and whence he now has run  
 To rouse his master with the rising sun.

' Who is Odatis, Zaffir ? Tell me, who ?  
 'Twas now I clasped her to my heart, and you  
 Came straight between me and my bliss. Oh say  
 Where dwells my darling ? On what dreamy way  
 Escaped she through the palace halls, and why  
 Delayed you not her feet that faster fly  
 Than woodland fawns or clouds that scud the sky ? '

‘O Zariadres ! O my prince ! The night  
Hath fooled you with vain visions of delight.  
For nought in all your chamber stirred or sped,  
While through the door I came, and by your bed  
Stood waiting till you woke, and watched the rays  
Ruddy upon the cedar boughs and bays  
Beneath your window ; and your eager hound  
Snuffed the keen air as though he fain would bound  
About the upland meadows where we go  
Ere noon be full to chase the flying roe.  
Then as I stayed, you smiled in sleep and threw  
Fond arms about my neck, and drank the dew  
Of my poor lips—not as our custom is  
To greet the morrow with a brother’s kiss,—  
But as though life and all that life holds dear  
Or fancy feigns were brimmed and chaliced here.’

‘Who is Odatis, Zaffir ? In my sleep  
Dame Venus spake words soft as winds that sweep  
Dim primrose paths in April ; for she said :  
I bring Odatis to thy marriage bed,  
Daughter of kings ; embrace her !—and I laid  
My lips upon the fairest lips that maid  
E’er lent her lover.’

‘Nay, Prince, nought I know.  
But rise and don thy raiment : we will go  
Down to the court, if haply we may hear  
Where dwells Odatis from some traveller.’

Then Zariadres from the coverlid,  
That lapped his rosy lustre, sprang, and hid  
Those limbs divine in royal weed, and went  
With Zaffir to the court-yard. There a tent  
Whereof the warp was gold wire, and the woof  
A maze of broidered blossoms, made a roof  
From morning sunbeams for the prince, and loud  
Around him rang the voices of the crowd.  
For there upon mosaic paved work stood  
Robed in strange wise a restless multitude ;  
Merchants from furthest Oxus and from Ind,  
Swart faces linen-swathed, o'er whom the wind  
Swept musky fragrant ; Arab chiefs with spear  
Trembling in sinewy hand, and hunting gear  
Slung round broad shoulders ; brawny Æthiop slaves,  
With Moors who dive into the deep sea caves  
To rob the coral-wreathed Nereides ;  
Syrians for whom soft gum-distilling trees  
Yield precious spice ; with them a fair-haired band  
Of hunters from the free Circassian land,  
Bearing good store of furs ; and some had gold  
Which with scant cunning from the envious hold  
Of Arimaspians griffins they were fain  
To wrest, emperilling dear life for gain.  
All these and many more whose name and race  
Are clean forgotten, filled the open place :  
For at this time the custom was each spring  
To hold a market for the Persian king ;  
That all the rich and rare things that the sun  
In his long daily journey looks upon,



Might so to please the monarch's gaze be brought ;  
And whatsoe'er seemed good to him was bought  
To deck his palace halls, and gold and gem  
The treasurer duly weighed and gave to them  
Who paid their lord free service. So this day,  
When Zariadres took his station, they  
Buzzed round him thinking that the royal eyes  
Should now be bent to scan their merchandise.  
But the Prince called his herald and bade sound  
Silence through courts and hall and garden ground ;  
And there was silence while the silver call  
Of trumpets thrilled the square from wall to wall.  
Then Zariadres spake :

‘O ye who stand  
Around me, if my name from each far land  
Hath power to lure you, tell me truth and say  
Where dwells Odatis?’

Then he ceased, and they  
Kept silence ; but the heralds lifting loud  
Their brazen tongues above the listening crowd,  
Cried in each several speech of men the same  
Challenge : twelve times rang forth the unknown  
name :

‘Where dwells Odatis?’ When they ceased, a man  
Sprang from the fair-faced crew Circassian,  
And cried :

‘I know Odatis ! I have seen  
The fairest of all maids that bloom between  
Ister and Indus, daughter of the king  
To whom the Marathi their tribute bring !’

Straight was he taken to the ivory chair  
 Where sat the Prince ; and an interpreter,  
 Circassian born, received his speech, and said :

‘ This man, O Prince, in vales Caucasian bred,  
 Fareth from farthest Scythia where the tide  
 Of wintry Tanais flows down dark and wide  
 To greet the inhospitable sea ; for there  
 The warlike Marathi yield ware for ware,  
 Taking soft silks and stuffs from Persian looms  
 With arabesques embroidered and the blooms  
 Of summer flowers, but giving furs of price,  
 And amber sought beneath the hummocked ice  
 Of frozen northwaves, and pure lumps of gold  
 From griffin-guarded Ural chasms cold.  
 There mid the Marathi Odatis dwells,  
 Fairest of maidens, as mid asphodels  
 The tall queen lily shineth, or the moon  
 Mid stars upon a silver night of June :  
 Daughter and heiress of their king is she,  
 And now the years of her virginity  
 Shall soon be ended, for the suitors fill  
 Her father’s halls, free horsemen, swift to spill  
 Life blood of him who thwarts their fiery will.’

Glad was Prince Zariadres and he cried :

‘ Nay, but no man shall win her for a bride,  
 Since mine she is ! Call my ambassadors,

And bid them lade a hundred mules with stores  
Of silks and sandalwood and spice and gems :—  
Nay, tear the diamonds from my diadems,  
That men may marvel when they see the train  
Wind over windy steppe and wavy plain  
Unto the station of the Scythian king !  
There let them leave those goodly things, but bring  
Odatis to my chamber : she shall be  
Princess of Persia on the throne with me.  
And thou, Circassian, take thee gold enow  
To live the wealthiest of thy tribe, and go  
Forth with my nobles : as thou lov'st thy life  
See that thou bring them without let or strife  
The straightest road to Tanais ford, and there  
Set them before the king's face ! I will wear  
The slow weeks here in Susa till ye come  
Bearing my Princess to her Persian home.  
Nay, Zaffir, go thou too : though loth to part  
With thee who still art second to my heart,  
Yet swear I none but thou shall plead for me :  
Oh, tell her how I clasped thee tenderly  
For her sweet sake in dreams, and how I pine  
Till the glad days of autumn make her mine.'

*OF THE EMBASSY AND HOW IT FARED.*

Now there was none in Persia to gainsay  
Prince Zariadres : so at break of day

Forth from the palace gates in glittering line  
 Went mules and camels, with the steely shine  
 Of spear points quivering round them ; and on high  
 Neath tents and palanquins that flout the sky,  
 The pomp of the ambassadors, enfurled  
 In dusty wreaths the stormful southwind whirled,  
 Sat solemn-eyed ; and Zaffir with them spent  
 The long slow hours in dreamy wonderment :  
 For they by field and forest, plain and sea,  
 Fared northward day by day unrestingly.  
 O'er many a desert tract of sand whereon  
 Glared with unlidded eyes the withering sun,  
 Mid cities old as time submerged beneath  
 Their mounded dust in everduring death,  
 Through cedar forests dark and ominous  
 Down the dim sides of shadowy Caucasus  
 Outstretched in black battalions, on and on,  
 Northward and westward, fared they till the Don,  
 Swift, broad and swirling, met their eager eyes  
 One eventide of August 'neath sad skies,  
 Arched with fire fretwork of fierce clouds that spanned  
 A brown plain limitless on either hand.

Then with the morrow's light they crossed the ford,  
 And came unto the castle of the lord  
 Who kept those marches for the Scythian king ;  
 Him with fair speech they prayed that he should bring  
 Their concourse to Omartes—this the name  
 Of fair Odatis' father. So they came

Ere sunset to the station of the race  
Of warlike Marathi—a goodly place,  
Not walled, but open to the rolling sea  
Of pasture where the milch mares love to be :  
For all the wealth of Scythia was in kine  
And swift steeds ; nor to plough the yeasty brine  
With keels in search of treasure, nor to till  
The fat glebe recked they ; but they roamed at will  
Over vast billowy tracts of green grass land  
Wild as the winds that sweep a stormy strand.  
Nathless Omartes, being chief and king  
Of this free folk, would rest from wandering  
Sometime in his fair palace ; and the maid,  
Odatis, went not with the tribe, but stayed  
Fenced from all harm in her delicious home.

There month by month like tempest-fretted foam  
In squadrons and in armies surged the tide  
Of turbulent Scythia, with rude pomp and pride  
Wooing the rosecheeked daughter of the chief :  
For so 'twas ruled that with the falling leaf  
She should be wedded to the lord whose hand  
Proved mightiest in the wide Marathian land.  
Wherefore with spear and steed caparisoned  
As for stern combat, and with Cossacks zoned,  
Rode princes hawk-eyed 'neath tempestuous brows ;  
And tilts there were and tourneys fit to rouse  
Sparks of hot manhood in young hearts, and prove  
Who ranged the doughtiest in the lists of love.

Yea but the whole land seethed with stormful strife,  
And of the suitors each man held his life  
Even in his hand as a vile thing and nought,  
Till that Odatis to his tent were brought  
After free sentence and the folk's acclaim,  
With him to reign queen of the Scythian name.

Thus toward the palace court the Persian train  
Grave-eyed and wondering o'er the pathless plain  
Wound slowly ; and a thousand eyes afar  
Spying their serried phalanx chafed for war :  
Then scouts and scudding turns, like wind-writhed sand,  
Wheeled round their escort ; and each sinewy hand  
Grasped a steel-pointed spear, or whirled a sword,  
Or set swift arrows to the glistening cord.  
'Peace !' cried the herald : 'foemen none are these,  
But bearers of great gifts and embassies  
Unto the Scythian from the Persian king !  
Hence to the palace courts, or stay and bring  
With martial service and high pomp their state  
Unto Omartes at the porphyry gate.'  
Then was their heat abated ; and some went  
Back to the town in cloudy discontent ;  
But some around the strangers hovering, viewed  
With curious eyes the goodly multitude ;  
While others to Omartes came and cried :  
'Hither, O King, from sun-struck Persia ride  
Grave men with mules well laden, and they say  
Their bounden service is to thee this day !'

So at the close of that short day they came  
To proud Omartes ; and the steady flame  
Of sunset flared on weary brows and eyes  
Worn with long travelling under ardent skies.  
Large was the court-yard : men and maidens leant  
From latticed windows in quick wonderment  
To gaze upon those grave ambassadors ;  
They grouped around the porphyry palace doors,  
Watched the unlading of their mules and chose  
Rare gifts and jewelled caskets to uncloset  
Before the glad eyes of the Scythian king,—  
Whispering the while of many a beauteous thing  
In speech the Scythians knew not : yet one name  
Was frequent on their lips, burning like flame  
The ears of pale Odatis ; for she heard  
‘ Prince Zariadres : ’ and this single word  
Leaped in her blood and tingled in her brain,  
Stirring her spirit with delicious pain.  
Nor knew she well whereof they spake, or why  
With gifts so great the grave-eyed embassy  
Unto her father’s palace halls were come ;  
For to all questioning the men were dumb.  
Nor to the audience chamber, now that night  
Had fallen on field and forest, seemed it right  
That those waywearied travellers should fare ;  
Therefore Omartes bade his grooms prepare  
Meet chambers for the men, and for their train  
Of mules and camels pickets on the plain.  
So rested they the night ; but in her bower

Odatis watched each slowly sliding hour,  
Wide-eyed and wondering who and what was he  
Whose unknown name controlled her destiny.

With morning on his ivory throne of state  
Omartes took his station at the gate  
Of porphyry named, and bade his trumpeter  
Call the ambassadors that he might hear  
What was their errand from the Persian king.  
Through court and hall the silver throats 'gan sing  
Their tyrannous summons, and the arches rang  
With trampling feet and voices and the clang  
Of clashed shields. Then the heralds brought the folk  
Of Susa to the throne, and Zaffir spoke :  
'Hear, King Omartes ! what our Prince decrees—  
Prince Zariadres, whom the southern seas  
Toward Araby and Ind, the western bound  
By rocky Hellas and the garden ground  
Of sunburned Syria, the northern grey  
'Neath farstretched shadowy Caucasus, obey :  
As equal unto equal he doth sue  
That thou in lawful wedlock wouldst bestow  
Thy daughter, fair Odatis, on his prime  
Of princely manhood ; that with him sublime  
Upon the throne of Susa she may sway  
All nations that the stars of heaven survey.  
Nothing he asks, but much therewith he yields—  
Rare silks of width to carpet yon green fields  
From sunrise unto sundown, glorious gems



Torn from imperial Indian diadems !  
Keep thou thy kingdom : nought he reckes thereof ;  
For he will win and wed a bride for love :  
But send thou nobles with thy child to see  
How she is throned in Persia royally ;  
Or come thyself with us, and be the guest  
Of him who in his palm holds East and West.’

Here Zaffir ceased and spread upon the ground  
Coffers and caskets ; but the monarch frowned ;  
And, ere he spake, fierce murmurs ’ran around :

‘ Nay, boy, take hence thy bribes ! none such need we  
Yet to thy master say that royally  
He woos Odatis ; and for this we give  
Thanks—yea, in peace with him we pray to live ;  
But for our daughter—chieftains, what say ye ?—  
She shall be wedded ere the wild wolds see  
December’s snowflake, to that Scythian lord  
Whose arm is strong to win her with the sword.  
For lo ! with her the royal seed decays  
In Scythia ; and ’tis ruled that she shall raise  
New generations of fierce kings to sway  
The Marathi, when we have passed away.’

Scarce had he ceased when cheering clamorous,  
Like cries of grappling legions, filled the house ;  
But with his hand Omartes bade the folk  
Awhile keep silence ; then again he spoke :

‘ Friends are ye, strangers ! yea, and guests, I trow ;  
 Nor from our Scythian station shall ye go  
 Home to fair Susa till ye learn what skill  
 In wrestling and in riding we who dwell  
 On these broad uplands, use with friend and foe.  
 And forasmuch as all men here shall know  
 Your lord is our good cousin, I will take  
 Yon golden beaker bossed with gems to slake  
 My thirst in winter when the halls are dim,  
 Drinking deep wassails and high healths to him.’

So said the king ; then bade his serving folk  
 Four black steeds to a Scythian chariot yoke ;  
 Of ivory were the knobs ; of brass the ring,  
 With runes enriched and rude enamelling,  
 Whereby the horses to the pole were bound ;  
 Of steel the wheel-rims where they grazed the ground ;  
 All else of birchen bark, and osier tough,  
 And seasoned ash wood, with the rind still rough  
 Upon the bending branches, so was twined  
 That the frail fabric seemed a thing the wind  
 Might play with—stout withal and firm enow  
 To bear three warriors through the mounded snow.  
 This for a peace gift to the Persian king  
 Was given to Zaffir. He much marvelling  
 To find his words fall like an idle tale  
 On the proud ears of Scythia, passion-pale,  
 Yet daring nought that might the wrath arouse  
 Of those tumultuous chiefs whose iron brows  
 Hung black with threats, resumed his speech, and said :

‘We thank thee, King ! Though poorly we have sped,  
Yea, though our journey to my Prince will be  
But heavy-hearted, yet thy courtesy  
Is as a fair well in a thirsty plain.  
As thou hast spoken, so will we remain  
Thy guests and servants till such time as men  
And beasts are rested from their labour ; then  
To Susa backward must we wend, and say  
How ill we fared before thy face this day.’  
‘So be it !’ cried Omartes ; and the courts  
Rang round him : then he bade that goodly sports  
To greet the strangers after Scythian wise  
Should fill the day and feast their wondering eyes.

*OF ZAFFIR'S CONVERSE WITH ODATIS.*

Meanwhile Odatis in her chamber heard  
None of these things, albeit the shouts that stirred  
The court-yard silence thrilled her ears, and dull  
The grudging minutes with slow feet of wool  
Passed o’er her throbbing pulses. Then there came  
Eariné—her fair face all aflame—  
With quick step to the bower, and cried :  
‘O queen !  
The goodliest youth these eyes have ever seen  
Woos thee for Zariadres ! Gems and gold,  
The price of empires, on the pavement rolled  
Like stones to tempt Omartes : and he said—

Zaffir his name was—that his lord would wed  
 None but Odatis, and that thou shouldst be  
 Throned o'er the Persian folk imperially !'

'What said my sire ?'

' Ah, marry, more the grief !

He vowed to wed thee to some Scythian chief :  
 Whereat thy suitors shouted, but the youth  
 Who spake for Zariadres, in good sooth,  
 Albeit his speech fell soft as summer rain,  
 Flashed such defiance from fierce eyes that bane  
 Must follow : then Omartes——'

' Prithee, stay

The torrent of thy tongue ; this only say,  
 Came Zariadres with the troop, or where  
 Abides he ?'

' Nay, the Persian envoys fare  
 Home to their Prince ere August is o'erpast.'

'Go then, Eariné, to Zaffir ; cast  
 Enchantment on the man ; and ere day dies  
 Bring him to meet me far from envious eyes  
 In the pleached alleys of the orchard : there  
 Alone will I receive him. And beware  
 Lest thy tongue, truant to thy faith, betray  
 Love-lost Odatis !—I meanwhile will pray.'

Eariné made answer :

' O my queen,

Surely another vision thou hast seen :  
Yet will I bring the youth '—she blushed, and hung  
Her forehead as a rose by southwinds swung—  
' For he is gentle, and my spirit tells  
He will abide my bidding without spells.'

It was the hour of evening when Love's star  
Trembling upon the melancholy bar  
Of sunset, melts young hearts, and Love is nigh  
In all the saffron spaces of the sky.  
Swift flew the stream ; the drooping apple boughs  
Glassed in its arrowy argent, framed dim brows,  
Mist-wreathed with maiden tresses, of the queen,  
Who stayed, a glimmering phantom, on the green :  
Beneath her skirts the grass was dewy wet—  
Not now with daffodil and violet,  
But with pale lilac crocus flowers o'erbloomed,  
Sad stars of autumn ; and the air, perfumed  
No more with April blossoms, held the scent  
Of fruits autumnal ; heavy branches bent  
Their golden freightage of ripe spheres to greet  
Even the kisses of her dainty feet.

Thither came Zaffir, whom Eariné  
Drew through the twilight very silently.  
Like moving mist they came the boughs between ;  
For both were clad in robes of filmy green,  
Mocking the mossed trunks with like coloured hues  
The fleet-foot fairies in their revels use.

Nor of their coming was Odatis ware ;  
 Till by her side Eariné stood fair  
 As summer twilight, pointing to the boy,  
 Whose lustrous eyes trembling with some strange joy,  
 Shone like twin stars descended from the sky  
 Obedient to a wizard's witchery.  
 Odatis blushed and started ; then she laid  
 Her finger on her lip, and whispering bade  
 Eariné to keep close watch and ward,  
 While she to Zaffir low-voiced :

‘ Is thy lord

Prince Zariadres ? ’

Here her woman's tongue  
 Faltered, and on her breast her fair head hung,  
 Till Zaffir's voice, like pleasing melody,  
 Startled the starry silence :

‘ I am he

Whom Zariadres sends to sue for thee !  
 Yet nought herein we prosper, for the king  
 Frowns on our suit and scorns the gifts we bring.  
 Ah, lady ! couldst thou see my Prince, or hear  
 His accents softer than the winds that stir  
 Rose-bowers of Shiraz ! couldst thou feel the flame  
 That flashed from his fierce brows when first thy name  
 Fell on his dreaming senses, and he cried,  
 Flinging himself from slumber—who doth hide  
 Odatis from me, Zaffir ? I have seen  
 Even in sleep the phantom of my queen !  
 Who is Odatis, Zaffir ? Tell me how

She from the chamber glided? Even now  
Within these arms I held her! hie thee hence,  
Swift as love-thoughts; with gentle vehemence  
Persuade her to be piteous, for I die  
Without the light of her felicity!—  
Nay, marvel not, my Princess! deign to hear  
Things true though strange: for when the dawn was clear  
On that faint April morning, to his bed  
Venus, celestial mother, so 'tis said,  
Of Zariadres, brought thee fairer far  
Than is the trembling of yon silvern star,  
Either in dreams, or, as a goddess can,  
Thy very self dissevered from the ban  
Of frail mortality, and smiled, and cried—  
Take her, my son, yea, take thy royal bride,  
Odatis, daughter of a thousand kings!  
Whereat the Prince, sleep-startled, stirs and flings  
Wild arms around a phantom, straining eyes  
In weary widowhood on the blank skies:  
Yet in his ear thy name thrills, and he knows  
That truth abides in visions, ere the close  
Of sleep fast following on the skirts of morn:  
Therefore by faith and honour he hath sworn  
To wed thee only, or for thee to waste  
Reft of the bliss that none but lovers taste.'

'In dreams, O Zaffir? when the night forlorn  
Faints in the fierce embraces of the morn?  
In April, saidst thou?—Deem me not o'erbold

To quit my coy retirement and the cold  
 Cloisters of shy concealment !—nay, I shrink  
 And tremble virginlike upon the brink  
 Of perilous parley !—Yet even so to me  
 Athwart the mists of slumber royally  
 Rode one I knew not ; on his face was flame  
 To stir my spirit, and his whispered name  
 So bowed and bound me that I rose and swore,  
 Weeping within these orchard alleys fair,  
 That henceforth I would wed no living wight ;  
 Since only Zariadres and the might  
 Of his great goodness could charm my sight.’

She ceased, and like to one with toil forspent  
 Sank on the flowery meadow : dew-besprent  
 Were those calm cups, matching her cheeks whereon  
 Mid blushes like faint pearls her shy tears shone.  
 But Zaffir smiled and triumphed : ‘ Surely here  
 Is love, god-guided, strong to cast out fear !  
 Not without fate, nay by the will, sweet queen,  
 Of powers celestial were these visions seen.  
 Therefore arise, and give good counsel ; say  
 How shall we bear thee to thy lord away ?  
 For lo ! in Susa trembling, aching, still  
 He sees the Orient skies each morrow fill  
 With light he loves not, wearing weary life  
 In fruitless sighing and unceasing strife,  
 Till thou arise upon his heavens, and be  
 The sunlight of his soul’s felicity ! ’



Long lay Odatis speechless : then she rose,  
And pacing slowly through the orchard close,  
Spake many words with Zaffir, while she wove  
A mesh of cunning schemes to cradle love.

‘Haste to thy lord and mine ! for ere the spring  
Clothe field and forest with enamelling  
Of frail May flowers, he from my father’s hall  
Shall bear his Scythian bride, a willing thrall.  
Meanwhile, if in this heart and brain be skill  
To work Omartes to his daughter’s will—  
As well I reckon he will nought refuse  
To wiles and woven charms that women use—  
I will provide that on the rolling plain  
The snows shall melt and grass be green again,  
Ere in these palace halls I yield my hand  
To suitor of the wild Marathian land.  
But on the verge of April we will call  
A day for sacrifice and festival,  
When I will swear in Jove’s high fane to choose  
My husband with such rites the Scythians use,  
Giving the golden cup and by the sun  
Plighting a troth that shall not be undone !  
This part be mine ! Let Zariadres come  
And claim Odatis in her Scythian home !’

So spake the Princess : and much more she said  
Of wiles whereby the Persians might be led

Through the Marathian outposts in the dress  
 Of warriors from the western wilderness.  
 Then for that now black night had fallen, and fair  
 Above the palace through translucent air  
 Streamed lights auroral—a celestial sea  
 Of blood that ebbed and flowed unceasingly—  
 Sighing Odatis turned, and like a wraith  
 Scarce seen in sleep by one that sorroweth,  
 Beneath those wonders of the skies she went,  
 Wild hope within her heart with sorrow blent.

#### *HOW ZARIADRES WON ODATIS.*

Fierce winter fell ; and on the Scythian plain  
 By sleety whirlwind and frore hurricane  
 A world of white was huddled : ridged and grey  
 Neath scowling skies the mounded snowdrifts lay ;  
 And like a vault of steel, thick-ribbed and cold,  
 Hung the rough ice beneath whose arches rolled  
 Wild Tanais with waves that chafed in vain,  
 Grinding their granite bed in voiceless pain.  
 Within her ivory hall as weeks stole by,  
 Odatis mid her maidens dreamily  
 Wiled the long days with talk and song and jest,  
 Stirring the spirit of a soft unrest  
 In all her aching veins ; for they would tell  
 Of love and many a midnight miracle  
 Wrought mid far races in forgotten times

For lovers : much she heard of southern climes  
From Greekish damsels and from darkeyed maids,  
Syrian or Persian; how the amaranth glades  
In Shiraz and in Susa all the year,  
Embowered in bays and laurels never sere,  
With rose-bloom flourish, and the sun doth smile  
Eternal summer on flower-circled isle,  
Samos, or Rhodes, or Lesbos, or the shine  
Of Paros white mid wavelets sapphirine.  
Then when night came, and north winds on the wold  
Wailed like were wolves, she in the silken fold  
Of slumber lapped from sadness smiling dreamed ;  
Till in her dream Prince Zariadres seemed  
With her in Junes eternal and the bliss  
Of summery cedar-shaded loveliness  
To drink dear love and life ; and she would cry  
Even in sleep—‘ The silent minutes fly ;  
The days and weeks like drifting snowflakes hover  
Bearing on wings of hurrying time my lover !  
Lo, even now perchance where pine trees frown  
Beneath the ice-bound awful airy crown  
Of Caucasus, by Caspian waves that eat  
For very rage their barren beach, his feet  
Fret the rough way, and Love doth lead him on !  
And now his chariot spurns the frozen Don !  
And now he clasps me ! ’—Startled then from sleep  
She watched the melancholy winter heap  
Snows upon snows ; and joy seemed far, and bare  
Were earth and heaven within the loveless air.

So slumber with frail hope and flying bliss  
 Fed her young soul ; but waking wretchedness  
 Consumed her, and life daily grew to be  
 A trance of dreadful drear expectancy.  
 Nor came there any sign ; nor might she hear  
 From wandering merchant or lone traveller  
 Aught from the wished-for southlands ; for the hand  
 Of winter lay like iron on all the land,  
 And silence round her brooded, and the spring  
 Was as an unimaginable thing.

Then came the day when in Omartes' hall  
 The Scythian suitors called to festival,  
 Should at the king's throne swear fresh fealty ;  
 That so the maid Odatis might be free  
 To choose her bridegroom, and by love's award  
 O'er the proud Marathi to make him lord.  
 From all the realm the royal kith and kin,  
 Rulers and princes, kings and mighty men,  
 Met in the palace : wassail all day long  
 With pompous sacrifice and solemn song  
 Filled a full month: yet never through the throng  
 Shone the keen eyes of Zaffir, or the grace  
 Of Zariadres on the eager face  
 Of desolate Odatis; but she sighed:  
 ' He hath forgotten ! Surely by the tide  
 Of smooth Choaspes with another maid  
 He sees the laughing lips of summer laid  
 On thorp and meadow, while for me remain

Nought but these windy steppes and barren plain,  
Where I shall perish !'

Thin and pale and wan,  
Yet like a lily fair to look upon,  
She went her ways on duteous service bent,  
Veiling her sorrow in a sad content.

Till now the tables in the hall were set,  
And on the king's enamelled carcanet  
Neath blazing torches shone barbaric gems ;  
While round the board a hundred diadems  
Crowned savage brows and fiery eyes and hair  
Of fierce chiefs flaunting on broad shoulders bare.  
Through roof and fretted rafter shrilled the loud  
Singing and harping of a minstrel crowd,  
Praising the great deeds of the mighty hand  
Of him who swayed the wild Marathian land.  
Then as they sat and drank and wine began  
With madness to inflame each fiery man,  
Omartes called his daughter, and her name  
Ran round the echoing walls like living flame ;  
For as amid her maidens rosy red,  
Robed in grey samite, bending her fair head,  
Up the long hall she paced, one cry arose  
Of ' Hail Odatis ! ' and the brazen blows  
Of armed heels on the paved work smitten, sent  
Clamour across the wilderness that blent  
With the fierce tumult of the winds at war.  
Then spake Omartes :

‘Lo, from near and far  
Thy suitors, daughter ! Long have I delayed,  
Fooled by the trifling of a timid maid.  
Take now thy choice : stout men are these and good  
To be the fathers of a kingly brood :  
Fear not that I shall balk thee ; look around ;  
Be fancy-free : his forehead shall be crowned,  
To whom thou yielddest on this night of Jove  
The golden goblet as thy pledge of love.’

Odatis took the beaker : then she stood  
Amid those eager eyes in yearning mood,  
As one who fain would loiter on the way  
To lifelong prison in mid month of May.  
With parted lips and eyes that seemed to see  
Beyond the bourne of frail mortality,  
At gaze she stood, nor shrank, but searched the room,  
If haply somewhere between glare and gloom  
Her lover lingered : but no shape supreme,  
Like to the splendour of her April dream,  
Flashed on those aching eyeballs : then she bent  
Her forehead in forlorn discouragement ;  
And beckoning Eariné, along  
The blazing banquet mid the shouting throng  
Passed to the altar of great Jove, and there  
Knelt in profound astonishment of prayer,  
Straining wild eyes and eager hands and breast  
That surged and billowed with pangs half suppressed.  
Then rising on the altar step she stayed,

And slowly mixed the ruddy wine, and laid  
Fresh incense on the flames that leaped to sup  
The grape juice foaming in the glittering cup.  
As in a dream, with gold-enwoven hair  
Around her marble shoulders, statue-fair,  
With tears upon her cheeks, and feet that grew  
Unto the senseless stone, and fading hue,  
Lingering and loth to leave, she stayed, nor heard  
How in the hall the lords wine-valiant stirred  
Vain echoes—nay, heard nought, but seemed to be  
Asleep and cradled in some mystery :  
Till raising weary eyes as one for whom  
All life is but a hurrying to the tomb,  
She saw beside her strong and still a man  
Clad in the travelling garb Marathian ;  
Grey was his tunic and his broad hat fell  
Over the radiant brows she knew so well ;  
Yea, and clear eyes on hers were fixed, as when  
In visions of the night o'er marching men  
She watched One chariot-throned, and heard the cry  
Of heralds shouting as they trampled by.  
As then in dreams, so now in waking truth  
The yearning souls flew forth of maid and youth,  
Met in mid air, and mingled, and no part  
For doubt or dread remained in either heart.  
He whispered : but his speech was nought but this :  
'Odatis ! I have found thee ! O my bliss !  
Even as thou said'st, here am I ; give to me  
The cup of gold !'

He ceased, and smiled ; but she  
 Poured the red wine upon the flames, and turned ;  
 And while the ruddy tongues of fire still burned,  
 Gave him the cup ; and from the altar they,  
 Like visions of the night or phantoms grey,  
 Stole with quick step unquestioned. Venus laid  
 A wondrous silver mist o'er youth and maid ;  
 And in the ears of all the Scythian kings  
 A sound of flutings and sweet carollings  
 Sang through the night, and held their charmèd sense ;  
 So that when morning through dim vapours dense  
 Peered weeping with southwinds, they rubbed wide eyes  
 And stared astonished at the vacant skies.  
 But of their wrath those lovers nothing knew ;  
 For four black Scythian chargers snorting drew  
 Their light car through the snow-sprent wilderness  
 That bridged the wasteful waves of Tanais.  
 There as they passed, the south wind swelled and rain  
 Fell with warm gusts upon the steaming plain :  
 Deep in his bed the mad stream stirred and shook  
 His frosty chains ; then wildly bounding broke  
 The prison-arch of ice, and thundering o'er  
 The huddling havock, surged on either shore,  
 Spreading a wilderness of flood wherethrough  
 No wight alive might fare while spring was new.

Thus passed Odatis : like a dream she went  
 With him who was her dream ; and wonderment  
 Filled either bosom, feeling that the bliss



Of visionary slumber matched with this  
Was as an idle shadow. But behind,  
She left a memory frail as woven wind ;  
For none knew how she fared or whither passed,  
But some averred that Jove himself had cast  
That silvery vapour round the saintly maid,  
That she, transported to the Elysian glade,  
Might meet the loves of mighty gods and be  
Mother of heroes through eternity.

Not this her fate ; but by the whispering tide  
Choaspes 'neath the cedar shade, a bride,  
With him she loved to wander. Story saith  
That they were lovers till the hour of death :  
And where on palace wall or pictured shrine  
The tales of ancient happy lovers shine,  
In gilded sandal-wood or ivory stained  
With hues of rose and saffron deep-engrained,  
There smiles Odatis and her Persian lord  
High on the Scythian car o'er steppe and sward  
Swiftly careering ; while behind them, bright  
As lesser lamps that gem the vaults of night,  
Eariné and Zaffir through the foam  
Of windy Tanais from Omartes' home  
Prick their free steeds, and Cupid o'er them hovers  
Lighting with torch benign the flying lovers.



## SONNETS.



## *INTELLECTUAL ISOLATION.*

### 1.

I WILL out-soar these clouds, and shake to nought  
The doubts that daunt my spirit : that is free,  
Invincible by death or destiny ;  
Nor need she take of love or friendship thought.  
Self-centred, self-sustained, self-guided, fraught  
With fervour of the brain enlightening me,  
Alone with God upon a shoreless sea,  
I'll find what men in crowds have vainly sought.  
I am at one with solitude, and loathe  
The tumult of those hopes and fears that fret  
Weak hearts in throbbing bosoms. Haply yet  
Some Titan vice or virtue shall unclothe  
Her mighty limbs for my sole sight, and I,  
Sufficing to myself and wisdom, die.

## II.

The world of human woe and weal I shun,  
Not forasmuch as I despise the joy  
That lightens when life wakes in girl or boy,  
And glittering sands through passion's hour-glass run :  
Of mortal joys there is not anyone  
But I have made it for myself the toy  
Of fancy, nor hath love had power to cloy  
Him who leaves all the deeds of love undone.  
Despair of full fruition drives me hence,  
Uncomforted to seek repose in God :  
Those tyrannous desires that stung my sense  
At every turn upon the road I trod,  
Seek their assuagement in a sphere where nought  
Dares to dispute the sovereignty of thought.

## III.

Nay, soul, though near to dying, do not this !  
It may be that the world and all its ways  
Seem but spent ashes of extinguished days,  
And love the phantom of imagined bliss :  
Yet what is man among the mysteries  
Whereof the young-eyed angels sang their praise ?  
Thou know'st not. Lone and wildered in the maze,  
See that life's crown thou dost not idly miss.  
Is friendship fickle ? Hast thou found her so ?  
Is God more near thee on that homeless sea  
Than by the hearths where children come and go ?  
Perchance some rotten root of sin in thee  
Hath made thy garden cease to bloom and glow :  
Hast thou no need from thine own self to flee ?

## IV.

Couldst thou clasp God apart from man, or dwell  
Merged in the ocean of that infinite good  
Where truth and beauty are beatitude,  
This earth might well appear a living hell,  
The prison of damned spirits that rebel,  
Matched with thy paradise of solitude :  
Nathless it is not clasping God to brood  
Upon thine own delusive dreams ; the cell  
Built by an anchorite that strives with fate  
And kindly fellow feeling, may be found  
Like to a maniac's chamber, when too late,  
Abandoned to his will, without or sound  
Or sight of men his brethren, on the ground  
He lies, and all his life is desolate.

## V.

It is the centre of the soul that ails :  
We carry with us our own heart's disease ;  
And craving the impossible, we freeze  
The lively rills of love that never fails.  
What faith, what hope will lend the spirit sails  
To waft her with a light spray-scattering breeze  
From this Calypso isle of phantasies,  
Self-sought, self-generated, where the daylight pales ?  
Where wandering visions of foregone desires  
Pursue her sleepless on a stony strand ;  
Instead of stars the bleak and baleful fires  
Of vexed imagination, quivering spires  
That have nor rest nor substance, light the land,  
Paced by lean hungry men, a ghostly band !

## VI.

Oh that the waters of oblivion

Might purge the burdened soul of her life's dross,

Cleansing dark overgrowths that dull the gloss

Wherewith her pristine gold so purely shone !

Oh that some spell might make us dream undone

Those deeds that fret our pillow, when we toss

Racked by the torments of that living cross

Where memory frowns, a grim centurion !

Sleep, the kind soother of our bodily smart,

Is bought and sold by scales-weight ; quivering nerves

Sink into slumber when the hand of art

Hath touched some hidden spring of brain or heart :

But for the tainted will no medicine serves ;

The road from sin to suffering never swerves.

## VII.

What skill shall anodyne the mind diseased ?

Did Rome's fell tyrant cure his secret sore

With those famed draughts of cooling hellebore ?

What opiates on the fiends of thought have seized ?

This fever of the spirit hath been eased

By no grave simples culled on any shore ;

No surgeon's knife, no muttered charm, no lore

Of Phœbus Paian have those pangs appeased.

Herself must be her saviour. Side by side

Spring poisonous weed and helpful antidote

Within her tangled herbage ; lonely pride

And humble fellow-service ; dreams that dote,

Deeds that aspire ; foul sloth, free labour : she

Hath power to choose, and what she wills, to be.



*FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND DEATH.*

## I.

FRIENDSHIP and Love I met upon a day :  
The one was clad in weeds of russet brown ;  
The other on his forehead wore a crown,  
And all his raiment sparkled like the May.  
Friendship cried to me with a kind voice 'Stay !'  
And well I knew her tender tones and mild ;  
But Love had caught me like a careless child,  
And spread his wings and carried me away.  
Then though I saw poor Friendship far below  
Wringing her hands and sobbing all in vain,  
I could but smile nor could I soothe her pain ;  
For Love still bore me, as strong winds that blow  
Bear withered leaves, and still Love whispered low  
'Heed not her cries, for we will come again.'

## II.

Lady, when first the message came to me  
Of thy great hope and all thy future bliss,  
I had no envy of that happiness  
Which sets a limit to our joy in thee :  
But uttering orisons to gods who see  
Our mortal strife, and bidding them to bless  
With increase of pure good thy goodness,  
I made unto the mild Mnemosyne  
More for myself than thee one prayer—that when  
Our paths are wholly severed, and thy years  
Glide among other cares and far off men,  
She may watch over thee, as one who hears  
The music of the past, and in thine ears  
Murmur ‘They live and love thee now as then.’

## III.

Alas ! nor Love nor Friendship hath the thews  
To strive with stubborn Death : though Death be thin,  
The wraith and phantom of forgiven sin ;  
While they are tinted with the morning hues  
Of God’s own glory, dropping roseate dew  
On hearts and homes of faith-regenerate men !—  
Nor friend nor wedded lover thee may win  
Back from Death’s sable cypress’d avenues.  
Therefore my song is stilled : for nought remains  
To comfort Love and Friendship but mute Hope ;  
Pale Hope, who seated by Death’s willow, strains  
Sad eyes upon Heaven’s unascended cope,  
Sighing ‘The starry summits upward slope  
Toward God for ever ; wait ; ’tis there she reigns.’

*A DREAM.**Ἐν ὀμμάτων ἀχηνίαις.*

I YEARN for you, my dearest ; for you came  
     In visions of the night and stood by me :  
     I took your hand, and set you on my knee,  
 And stroked your hair, and drank the sunny flame  
 Of your large eyes : I kissed your cool moist lips,  
     And laid your cheek to mine, and asked you why  
     You stayed so long away ; for lovers die  
 In one short week of waiting, tears eclipse  
 The moonlight of their eyes, where hope hath lit  
     Radiance reflected from the brows they love :  
     And then you laughed, and playful seemed to prove  
 Whether or no I loved you, frowned and knit  
     Brows all unused to anger, smiled again,  
     And nestled to my side and breathed away my pain.

And then I woke. The dazzling summer sun  
Shot fiery arrows through the hot white blind,  
Withering the dream for which my spirit pined,  
Urging me up life's weary race to run.  
And you were gone. Oh, why did cruel sleep  
Show me my darling to confuse the morrow  
With sweetest recollection steeped in sorrow?  
Might I not plod along the road and keep  
My recreant thoughts from banished Paradise?  
Might I not glue my face to books, or fast  
Till long oblivion sealed the erring past?  
Oh, it is hard ! Prayer, penance, sacrifice  
Must slowly wipe away short sleep's delight,  
And years repair the ruin of a night.

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*IN ABSENCE.*

## I.

It irks me that the currents of my mind  
Indifferent images with subtle art  
Huddle like leaves tossed by the winter wind  
Profuse and frequent, while my careful heart  
Seeks, craving, through the wilderness of change  
The face she longs for—sadly and in vain  
Arrests the empty shadows as they range,  
Finding no comfort. On the steadfast brain  
A thousand forms are printed, features caught  
From pictures, travels, and the dreams of night ;  
Each clear and perfect, some with terror fraught,  
Some sad, some common, some divinely bright ;  
But nowhere in the visionary train  
Shinest thou, my queen, to smile away my pain.

## II.

Dearest, why can I not behold thy face  
When dreary distance makes me yearn and pine ?  
I muse and muse, each several feature trace,  
And draw again each well remembered line.  
But when I fain would see thee as thou art,  
The dream dissolves ; I have no power to bind  
These separate recollections, or impart  
Thy soul's life to the shadows of my mind.  
Eyes, lips, and brow, soft cheek, and braided hair,  
I see them all ; for one by one they glide  
Into my memory, and vanish there,  
Leaving my seeking soul unsatisfied.

Thus doth Love cheat us with an empty show,  
Concealing that which we most wish to know.

## III.

Love cheats himself too greedily discerning  
Each separate sweet of that which he adores ;  
And, line by line, the form of beauty learning,  
Forgets the pictured whole on which he pores.  
Thus he divides what he should unify :  
Too much division doth confuse the soul,  
Dissolves the subtle spirit's entity,  
And gives the parts where we would have the whole—  
Like cracked unequal mirrors which reveal  
The forehead here, and here the lip discover ;  
Or like the ruffled stream which still did steal  
His proper image from the poor self-lover ;  
Or like the minds of men who feebly clasp  
Now this, now that, the great All never grasp.

*TWO SONNETS OF UNREST.*

WHAT of the night? Upon the western bar  
A white light lingers ; and the East is grey  
Not yet with risings of the wished-for day,  
Nor yet the glimmering of the herald star  
Sheds hope, however faint and frail and far :  
Still ringed around with gloom we sit and say,  
What of the night? Still wrestle we as they  
Who wage with shapes of fever fruitless war.  
For weariness our very souls expire,  
For watching and for waiting. Is there worse  
Torment than this of ours, for whom no fire  
Of Hell is lighted ; but our barren curse  
Is summed in one inexorable verse—  
That without hope we languish in desire?

Happy were they who fought with beasts and fell  
    Bloodstained on sand beneath the lion's paw :  
    Heaven open with untroubled eyes they saw,  
And through the fierce assembly's savage yell  
Heard symphonies of angels. It was well  
    Thus daring nobly for the better law,  
    To march into the wide and ravening maw  
Of mere material death unterrified.  
But we who strike at shadows, we who fight  
    With yielding darkness and with thin night-air,  
Who shed no blood, who see no hideous sight,  
    For whom no heaven is opened—our despair  
And utter desolation infinite  
    Can find nor calm nor comfort anywhere.

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*AN OLD GORDIAN KNOT.*

## I.

BETWEEN those men of old who nothing knew,  
     But sang their song and cried the world is fair,  
     Or dreamed a dream of heaven to cheat despair,  
     Piling void temples neath the voiceless blue,  
 And those for whom with revelation due  
     Pure wisdom and the lore of all things good  
     May yet be granted in the plenitude  
     Of ages still to come and æons new,  
 Stand we who, knowing, yet know nought : undone  
     Is all the fabric of that former dream ;  
     Those songs we have unlearned, and, one by one,  
 Have tossed illusions down the shoreless stream ;  
     Tearless and passionless we greet the sun,  
     And with cold eyes gaze on a garish gleam.

## II.

I stood at sunrise on an Alpine height  
Whence plains were visible, and the domed sky  
Spread vacant in serene immensity ;  
Westward beneath my feet curled vapours white,  
And grew and gathered, while the East was bright :  
Then as the silver wreaths clomb silently,  
Methought a shadowy giant steeple-high  
Towered up above me ringed with radiant light.  
Standing he bore the shape of me who stood  
Sole on that summit; yea, he bowed or rose,  
Beckoned or threatened, as my varying mood  
Constrained his movement ; till the light that grew,  
Wrought from the strife of clouds supreme repose,  
And heaven once more was still and stainless blue.

## III.

Then in my soul I cried : even such is God—  
Made in our image, fashioned in our form,  
Woven on the vapours of the secular storm,  
Where spirit stirred not, nay nor Seraph trod :  
He framed no Adam from the plastic clod,  
No Eve for Adam's helpmate ; but this worm,  
Spawned by the world what time her spring was warm,  
This man, that crawled on earth's primeval sod,  
Learned not himself, but seeking outward saw  
Transfigured self on circumambient air ;  
Whence seized by fatal impulse and strange awe,  
Worshipping what he knew not, he enslaved  
Æons of men who blindly wept and raved  
To filmy phantoms of their own despair.

## IV.

Moloch whose frown with furnace flame is dim,  
Starlike Astarte and crowned Ashtaroth,  
With her who rising from the bitter froth  
Of ocean waves loosened each languid limb;  
Jehovah, lord of holiness, whose wrath  
Scatters like clouds the shuddering Seraphim,  
And He, the Crucified, who bound to him  
The bleeding nations with a brother's oath;  
All these, and all besides whom all men fear,  
Are the phantasmal shadowy shows of man,  
Flesh of our flesh, soul of our soul, made clear  
And magnified for feeble eyes to scan ;  
Our gods ourselves are, glorious or base,  
As the dream varies with the varying race.

## V.

What then was He, the Sun, who flashed his ray  
On that thin veil of momentary mist,  
Who summoned from the darkness and dismissed  
The spectre of myself at break of day ?  
Was he not Lord perchance ? The phantom grey,  
Glimmering with purple and pale amethyst,  
He played with, as kings play with whom they list,  
Then did but smile, and made it melt away.  
Thus, howsoe'er our dreams and visions range,  
Dwells there not One secure, who still abides,  
Creating all, surveying chance and change,  
Whose ray the darkness and the cloud divides ?  
Him yet we see not, but shall surely see  
When in His time he bids the shadows flee.

## VI.

If this indeed be truth, how long shall man,  
Involved in dreams, deluded by vain hope,  
Fulfil the past's forgotten horoscope,  
Nor raise his head to heaven's meridian ?  
Alas ! nay, let him raise it : let him scan  
The temples of the sky from base to cope :  
What finds he there ? The azure arches slope  
Upward as when creation's day began :  
Pure light, pure ether, fine, impalpable :  
No form appears ; no thunder from the void  
Startles the stillness with plain oracle ;  
The powers of earth and heaven are still employed  
In weaving their thin veil invisible,  
Nor have the growing years the veil destroyed.

## VII.

Part of the whole that never can be known,  
Is this poor atom that we call our world ;  
Part of this part amid confusion hurled  
Is man, an idiot on a crumbling throne :  
Yea, and each separate soul that works alone,  
Striving to pierce the clouds around him curled,  
Gasps but one moment in the tempest whirled,  
And what he builds strong Death hath overthrown.  
How shall this fragment of a waif, this scape  
In the oblivion of unreckoned years,  
This momentary guest of time, this ape  
That grins and chatters amid smiles and tears,—  
How shall he seize the skirts of God and shape  
To solid form the truth that disappears ?

## VIII.

Let man with man, let race with race, let age  
With age æonian linked in serried line,  
Scale the celestial station crystalline  
And with high God continual battle wage :  
Nay, let them pace in patient pilgrimage  
Toward that unknown mysterious hidden shrine  
Where dwells the very truth and life divine,  
If haply they may greet and kiss their liege.  
O whither, whither shall their steps be led ?  
Upward or downward, on what paths of thought?—  
Have ye not seen the clouds that morning bred,  
Storming Olympus with fierce thunder fraught ?  
Ere noon they went their way, and overhead  
The same clear web of limpid light was wrought.

---

*THE ALPS AND ITALY.*

## I.

I HAD two loves : now both are lost to me !  
One was a maiden, pure as mounded snow,  
Bright as those scentless summer flowers that blow  
On Alpine summits, uncontrollably free  
As winds that sweep the frozen glacier sea :  
The other was a witch, whose dark eyes glow  
Like mirrored stars asleep on Lario,  
Whose voice is even the voice of Italy.  
Now both are lost, which was the best beloved—  
She whose clear smile of daylight drew me up  
O'er snow and scaur to greet the ascendant sun ;  
Or she whose mouth mixed passion like a cup,  
Wherefrom I drank such rapture unreprieved  
As Dian showered on young Endymion ?

## II.

O solemn hours of high-souled solitude,  
Health and composure of the passionless mind !  
On those calm heights no earth-born vapours blind  
The spirit in her heaven-aspiring mood.  
Love, my first love, who wert so true and good,  
Why did I ever fly from thee to find  
The bloom that withers and the joys that bind  
Mid Circe's sloth-imbruted multitude ?  
Wearied, heart-broken, worn, and withering,  
How can I lift me to thy luminous eyes ?  
My wasted life is but a worthless thing.  
Above me spread the light-irradiate skies,  
While caged and cribbed the soul within me dies,  
Nor can the slow years heal her shattered wing.

## III.

Thou second love, have I no hymn for thee,  
No holocaust to render at thy shrine,  
Where lap the waveless waters hyaline  
Of Venice shielded from the rough rude sea ?  
Lo, thou hast had all thy wild will of me ;  
And I am but thy bond-slave ; I am thine,  
Mad wondrous love of May-nights and the shine  
Of quivering lamps and wave-borne minstrelsy !  
No need to sing thy praises, or to pray  
To thee, who hovering o'er my dreaming head,  
Drainest my life-blood nightly, day by day  
Pursuest me with visions, and dost spread  
Snares for my failing feet ! Though thou art dead,  
Thy phantom lures me still to sure decay.

## IV.

Nay, Loves, of one high lineage undefiled,  
As ye are strong and dreadful, and must be  
Lords of my life for all eternity,  
So be ye also merciful and mild.  
To you I gave myself while yet a child :  
I cried, 'For beauty, lo, I live ; for me  
There shall be nought in earth or air or sea,  
That shall not fill my heart with rapture wild.'  
Slay not your servant ! See me stabbed and stung  
With arrows of intolerable ire !  
Shafts from your splendours on my spirit flung,  
Have parched my heart's blood with intensest fire :  
I vowed to live for your divinity ;  
Like lightning-smitten Semele, I die.

## V.

Fair sights and sounds assail me. I am torn  
By the quick pulses of the passionate sky,  
Throbbing with light of stars, or stormfully  
Piling pearled thunder-clouds athwart the morn.  
The strange sweet glance, the smile of passers borne  
From hearts that know me not through lip and eye,  
Thrill me with fruitless longing—I would die  
To feel their life and be less love-forlorn.  
The world is thus a quiver stored with sharp  
Fledged shafts of inexpressible pleasure-pain,  
Searching the marrow of the wakeful brain ;  
While memory, like a tense Æolian harp,  
Sensitive to the breath of dreams that sweep  
Its tingling chords, torments the soul in sleep.



## VI.

Gustans gustavi mellis paullulum,  
Et ecce morior !—A little honey  
I tasted, pure as palest agrimony,  
And lo, the death-pangs on my soul are come !—  
Was this my sin ? Amid the tangled trees  
Where He hath set our going, drops the comb  
From many a pendent bough, the wild bee's home  
May we not take thereof a little ease ?  
God hangs that harmless venom in our sight ;  
But man's vow makes it mortal, or man's will  
Bent upon lawlessness and lewd delight.  
Could we but extirpate each thought of ill,  
Could we but strip our soul of self, we might  
Aye taste God's honey on His holy hill.

## VII.

'Tis self whereby we suffer : 'tis the greed  
To grasp, the hunger to assimilate  
All that earth holds of fair and delicate,  
The lust to blend with beauteous lives, to feed  
And take our fill of loveliness, which breed  
This anguish of the soul intemperate :  
'Tis self that turns to pain and poisonous hate  
The calm clear life of love the angels lead.  
Oh, that 'twere possible this self to burn  
In the pure flames of joy contemplative !  
Then might we love all loveliness, nor yearn  
With tyrannous longings ; undisturbed might live,  
Greeting the summer's and the spring's return,  
Nor wailing that their bloom is fugitive !

## VIII.

Too far I wander from my chosen theme. —  
Once more, ye mountains, and ye lands, once more,  
With oleanders crowned and olives hoar,  
To you returns the spirit of my dream.  
Upon this Sabbath morning all things seem  
Hallowed to calm. Thus oftentimes before  
The seventh day brought a truce to pain, and bore  
My shallop through still waters down life's stream.  
Nearer to God, in this sedater mood,  
I can surmount those rival loves, and see  
Both beauties blent in His beatitude.  
My earth-bound soul now for one hour is free ;  
And soaring upward from this altitude,  
The Love of Loves Himself enlightens me.

---

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.



*FROM HEINE.*

THERE is a fir stands lonely  
In the North on a bald hill-brow :  
It sleeps, and with folds of whiteness  
Envelop it ice and snow.

It sleeps and dreams of a palm-tree,  
Far off in the Morning-land,  
Lonely and silent pining  
On a cliff o'er the shimmering sand.

---

*THE LOVE OF THE ALPS.*

THERE was a time, ye mountains and ye streams,  
Ere yet I knew the might of your control ;  
But now, where'er I go, your presence seems  
To fill the inmost chamber of my soul,  
Restraining me in hours of sloth from wrong  
And prompting nobler thoughts when I am strong.

Long time I listened patient at your knee  
To hear the melody which would not flow  
From cloud and crag and breathing wind and tree  
And silver summits of untainted snow ;  
Yet still I waited, bowed in bitter shame,  
And on my thankless spirit laid the blame.

It was a dark and drear novitiate :  
I saw, but could not feel your awful calm :  
I lay abandoned at your palace gate :  
Fainting I wrestled for the glorious palm :  
And knew that he who strives must surely win,  
That he who knocks and waits will enter in.

Many there passed me glad and light of heart  
With counterfeited hymns of hollow praise,  
Who bade me in their service take a part—  
I scorned their empty words and erring ways,  
And rather chose to lie outside your shrine  
Than be the High Priest of the half divine.

You saw and heard me ; not one weary hour  
Of all that waiting time was spent in vain ;  
For since I felt your strong prophetic power  
Beat in the fiery pulse of heart and brain,  
You have not left your servant day or night,  
But are his ceaseless source of comfort and delight.

There was no blinding vision, no loud cry  
Of thundrous adjuration, when my soul

Felt that the consecrating grace was nigh,  
And heard the heavenly gates asunder roll,  
And saw the hallowed mysteries, and trod  
The sounding chambers of the house of God.

Sunsetting and sunrising, silent stars  
In dim procession through the untroubled sky,  
Still winds that came and went, and noisy jars  
Of whirlwinds battling with the clouds on high,  
The solitary voices of the floods,  
Flowers, and deep places of primeval woods ;

These wrought the change ; for these from child-  
hood's dawn  
Had nurtured me ; through these, as through the rites  
Of due initiation I was drawn  
Into communion with those sacred heights  
On which God's glory broodeth as a cloud,  
Which with the voice of very God are loud.

---

*THE CROCUS AND THE SOLDANELLA.*

WHEREVER on the untrodden Alps  
The snows begin to fade,  
And frozen streams to leap again  
Beneath the pine-tree shade ;

While still the grass is brown and dead  
With its long winter sleep,  
And leafless shrubs their withered arms  
Stretch down the barren steep ;  
Then here and there two little flowers,  
Like lights of earliest morn,  
Or rays of hope in sorrow seen,  
Shine on the slopes forlorn.  
They break the snow with gentle force  
And struggle toward the sun :  
The chilly wreaths around them melt,  
The streams beneath them run.  
The dull old earth feels young again,  
So fresh and bright they peer,  
Pale pearly cups and lilac bells,  
Crying ' The spring is here.'  
But when the snows have died and flown  
Like spirits to the sky,  
In shape of fleecy summer clouds  
That on the mountains lie ;  
When on the cool green fields the grass  
Grows deeper day by day ;  
And all the troops of laughing flowers  
Make rock and meadow gay ;  
Then you may look in vain to find  
These first frail buds of spring :  
The month that quickens all to life  
Hath watched their withering.  
They broke the frozen winter snow,  
And spake the first good morrow ;



They bade us be of better cheer  
When we were dulled with sorrow.  
Now they must die and droop away :  
Their very graves ignore them ;  
Fresh leaves and gaudy blossoms wave  
Above the slopes that bore them.  
Only where here and there the snows  
Of avalanches linger,  
And Winter on a gloomy dell  
Lays his cold lifeless finger ;  
There still secluded from the wealth  
Of happier fields they blow,  
Blooming and fading hour by hour  
Near the retreating snow.  
They bloom and fade, and do not shrink  
From their appointed duty ;  
To show the path that June must tread  
But not to share her beauty ;  
To live their short lives on the brink  
Of death, and then to perish,  
Between the chill snow and the sun  
That burns but does not cherish.  
Die, little flowers, but not unwept  
Nor yet unhonoured die :  
Like you dawn's herald star doth fade  
From the dim morning sky ;  
Like you the great and good and wise,  
The first of those who woke

From sleeps of ignorance and through  
The snows of ages broke,  
Sank, having done their work, nor saw  
The summer they foretold—  
Glad flowers and grasses o'er them wave,  
Blue, crimson, green, and gold.

---

*ON THE ALP.*

WE met, but nought from thee I prayed,  
Thou solitary mountain maid :  
How could I tame  
Unto my melancholy mood,  
The rhythms of thy bounding blood,  
Thy soul of flame ?

I did but see thee and pass by,  
Gazing with half-averted eye  
Lest Love should leap  
Upon my heart like winds that dash  
The rock-entwining mountain ash  
Adown the steep.

Yet as I looked and saw thee stand  
Twixt sun and shade with lifted hand  
And bright eyes blue,

With curving lips half opened free,  
And hair that curled tempestuously,  
And heightened hue ;

Receiving full on furtive eyes  
The magic of thy soft surprise,  
The subtle spell  
Of some sweet trouble in thy mind  
Scarce felt like tremblings undefined  
On a clear well ;

Into my soul of souls a god  
With wild fire flew, and flaming trod  
Her secret shrine ;  
So that I stood astonished then,  
And now beneath the eyes of men  
In silence pine.

---

*BEFORE SUNRISE.*

A FULL moon sinking in the west ; a beam  
Of morn uprising from the orient skies :  
Dim meadow-ways beneath, where the dew lies  
And flowers of autumn crocus faintly gleam.  
Through the hushed pines, beside the hurrying stream,  
We downward fare, while bells of dawning rise  
From unseen hamlets, and before our eyes  
The solid world looms like a twilight dream.

High up in heaven above the unfading snow,  
Laved by strong ocean floods of confluent light,  
A sole star shines ; within its restless spark  
Ruby and sapphire mingle, shoot, and glow—  
Thus, Petrarch, didst thou burn, intensely bright,  
Betwixt the day-spring and the dolorous dark

---

*THE CAPPUZIN.*

A SPHINX-LIKE face, wrapped with eternal snow,  
Frost-bound in petrefaction, stark and dread,  
With sneers on the blurred lips and eyeballs dead,  
And menace on the brows that lie so low ;  
A Niobe whose tears have ceased to flow,  
Ridged into icy wrinkles ; vanquishèd  
Prometheus, who no longer lifts his head  
To give Jove's vulture blow for bloody blow ;  
The image of a spent faith, mocking man  
With vain similitude of human form,  
Obsolete, outworn, ugly, ossified,  
Clogged with dull mist and elemental storm  
Whereof the ancient harmonies have died  
Down to blank murmurs, doubts æonian.

---

*ON THE SCHWARZHORN.*

IN the divine September weather  
 We clomb yon sable horn, as free  
 As any floating wind-stirred feather  
 Of cloud in heaven's immensity.

The heavens above us slept, and golden  
 Were all the lights of earliest day :  
 Not one sharp peak was unbeholden  
 Of all the heights that round us lay.

East called to West with giant voices,  
 And North to South gave back the song ;  
 With pride as when a god rejoices,  
 The Ortler shouted to Mont Blanc.

Bernina's serried ice-tops glistened  
 In glory of the ascendant morn ;  
 And far away those brethren listened  
 Around the towering Aletschhorn.

From pain and care and fear delivered  
 We drank the sun-illuminated view :  
 The little winds that round us shivered,  
 Brought wingèd hopes and rapture new.

Then from that high up-lifted eyrie  
We hailed Pitz Languard, and the span  
Of all those years, so sweet, so weary,  
Was bridged, and better life began :

For past and present flew together ;  
Father and mother, side by side,  
In the divine September weather  
Saw in their child love justified.

---

*AN AUTUMN DAY.*

A SOUL is in the sunlight. Not one breath  
Troubles the stainless and translucent sky.  
Methinks the spirits of the mountains fly  
Heaven-ward like flames. Blue air encompasseth  
The congregated Alps that lift on high  
Their crownèd brows, to hear what Summer saith.  
She, having whispered, will depart ; and death  
Comes in the clasp of Winter by and by.  
Hushed are the pines. There is no stir, no strife,  
No fretful wailing of frore winds that blow  
Earth's winding-sheet of cold uncoloured snow.  
This morn, upon the brink of dying, Life  
Draws a deep draught of peace, and rapture thrills  
Through all the pulses of the impassioned hills.

*NOVEMBER.*

FROST comes ; and the summer is finished ;  
 The world lies vacant and still,  
 To dream through the winter with minished  
 Dull life in the desolate chill.

Thus we, when the sense of enjoyment  
 Hath passed from our blood and our brain,  
 Are left without light or employment  
 In passionless pain.

---

*AFTER SUNSET.*

My heart is far away :  
 Love holds it in his hand  
 On that enchanted strand,  
 With hope and youth to-day.

My prison house of snow  
 Is still and cold as death :  
 There comes not any breath  
 From love that laughs below.

Into the skies I gaze  
 At sundown for the star  
 Who looks on love afar  
 Beneath those roseate rays.

Will my heart's message come ?  
Speak, star, or I shall die !—  
Hesper hath set, dark night is nigh,  
Love sleeps, my heart is dumb.

---

*AN INVITATION TO THE SLEDGE.*

COME forth, for dawn is breaking ;  
The sun hath touched the snow :  
Our blithe sledge-bells are calling,  
And Christian waits below.

All day o'er snow-drifts gliding  
'Twixt grey-green walls of ice,  
We'll chase the winter sunlight  
Adown the precipice.

Above black swirling death-waves  
We will not shrink nor blanch,  
Though the bridge that spans the torrent  
Be built by an avalanche.

We'll talk of love and friendship  
And hero-hearted men,  
Mid the stems of spangled larches  
In the fairy-frosted glen.



With flight as swift as swallows  
We'll sweep the curdled lake,  
Where the groans of prisoned kelpies  
Make the firm ice-pavement quake.

We'll thread the sombre forest,  
Where giant pines are crowned  
With snow-caps on their branches  
Bent to the snowy ground.

Strong wine of exultation,  
Free thoughts that laugh at death,  
Shall warm our wingèd spirits  
Though the shrill air freeze our breath.

With many a waif of music  
And memory-wafted song,  
With the melody of faces  
Loved when the world was young,

With clear Hellenic stories  
And names of old romance,  
We'll wake our soul's deep echoes  
While the hills around us dance :

Dance to the arrowy motion  
Of our sledge so firm and free,  
Skimming the beaten snow-track  
As a good ship skims the sea.

*AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.*

Like love, like all that's joyous,  
 Like youth, like life's delight,  
 This day is dawning o'er us  
 Between a night and a night.

O friend, 'tis ours to clasp it !  
 Come forth ! No better bliss  
 For hearts by hope uplifted  
 Hath heaven or earth than this !

*A BALLATA.*

' I MET my love among the low  
 Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

O shepherd, drive thy flocks a-field,  
 Thy hungry flocks, that feed alway  
 Upon the flowers of thoughts that yield  
 Sweet pasture to the soul in May !  
 Yet, ere thou leave me, shepherd, say  
 Where Love's immortal lilies grow !

' I met my love among the low  
 Lake-gardens of Menaggio.'

Is there a home for errant Love,  
 Whose wings are weary with the chase  
 Of airy dreams that float above

The clasp of flying Love's embrace ?  
Know'st thou some cool and tranquil place  
Where poppies and nepenthé blow ?

‘I met my love among the low  
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.’

Say, shepherd, hast thou seen the god  
Who in his arms bears wounded Love ?  
Have thine enchanted footsteps trod  
Elysium's sleepy myrtle-grove,  
Where rest remains for souls that strove,  
And waters of oblivion flow ?

‘I met my love among the low  
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.’

O shepherd, hast thou nought but this  
Wherewith to soothe a heart that yearns ?  
So may thy fair flocks never miss  
Meet pasturage mid flowers and ferns,  
As thou shalt tell me whither turns  
Love wildered on the homeless snow !

‘I met my love among the low  
Lake-gardens of Menaggio.’

---

## IN FEBRUARY.

THE birds have been singing to-day  
And saying : 'The spring is near !  
The sun is as warm as in May,  
And the deep blue heavens are clear.'

The little bird on the boughs  
Of the sombre snow-laden pine  
Thinks : 'Where shall I build me my house,  
And how shall I make it fine ?

'For the season of snow is past :  
The mild south wind is on high ;  
And the scent of the spring is cast  
From his wing as he hurries by.'

The little birds twitter and cheep  
To their loves on the leafless larch :  
But seven foot deep the snow-wreaths sleep,  
And the year hath not worn to March.

---

WAITING.

THE sunbeams slant along the snow ;  
It is a day of days :  
O magic of those lands below,  
How long the spring delays !  
Hast thou detained her on the shore  
Where bloom Love's lilies ever more ?

*FRAGMENT OF A LETTER.*

I PAUSE, and break this sombre strain.—  
Do you remember how the rain  
Hissed in the beech-boughs, when one night  
We sat and talked in evening light  
Here in the music-room, and you  
Played Bach's first prelude not quite through?  
And how the weird discordant cry  
Of that old Erard made me sigh,  
Thinking what wealth of memories  
Lay locked and frozen in its keys?  
Here am I sitting now : the rain  
Beats on the rattling window-pane ;  
And yet I dare not thus alone  
Evoke that melancholy tone,  
I cannot strike one chord lest I  
Should have to wail in sympathy :  
For am I not like it forlorn,  
With strings of sweetest tone outworn,  
Thrust out of sight in Alpine cold,  
Ere half my melodies are told?

---

*PROMETHEUS DEAD.*

ON a night of mid December,  
In this land of frost and snow,  
Came a dream which I remember  
After years of joy and woe,  
For the vision bore the burden  
Of a hundred voices heard on  
Shores of life where hope is low.

Mid Caucasian crags I wandered,  
Peaks up-piled above the sea,  
And my soul was dark and pondered  
Cheerless on a doom to be,  
Which I could nor mark nor measure,  
Though its cold incumbent pressure  
Like a mountain weighed on me.

'Twas the moment when the mellow  
Lights of earliest dawn are felt,  
Long before the east is yellow  
Or the shades begin to melt,  
But some tremor gives a warning  
To the shuddering stars that morning  
Stirs beneath dim Ocean's belt.

To those gaunt grey cliffs, fantastic  
Torrents clung of flawless ice,

Carved and moulded by the plastic  
    Hand of frost with quaint device ;  
Fret, frieze, pinnacle, pilaster,  
Sharp and clear as alabaster,  
    Sculptured on the precipice.

Here the storm and stress of winter,  
    Here the smiting shafts of morn,  
Strewed the stones with spilth and splinter  
    From the fairy fabric torn ;  
But though changing, lasting never,  
Still new shapes were rising ever,  
    From the frozen fountains born.

Through the twilight stern and solemn,  
    Long, how long, I groped my way,  
Twixt sheer crag and azure column,  
    Where the glassy ruin lay ;  
Till at length there flew a message  
From the sea, with rosy presage  
    Heralding the birth of day.

Then at that first blissful minute,  
    While my heart leaped up to face  
Dawning with the world's life in it,  
    And the sun-god's dear embrace,  
Led by dreams I found a chasm  
Where the earth-throe's primal spasm  
    Clove the hills from cope to base.

Slept old ocean's myriad fountains  
Like a glittering snake encurled  
Round the girdle of the mountains,  
On the limits of the world ;  
But above, in new-born glory,  
Rose a glacier smooth and hoary,  
Where the wildest rocks were hurled.

From abrupt and monstrous ledges  
Hung the flood upheld by frost ;  
Pierced with adamantine wedges  
Five times mid the tempest-tossed  
Wreck of old-world ice that weltered  
On the scaur no forest sheltered,  
And no foot hath ever crossed.

Waved like water, like a mirror  
Crystal-clear without one flaw,  
Quickening the soul to terror  
With a vague mysterious awe,  
Flowed that fount of tears eternal  
Freed and fixed by the diurnal  
Interchange of frost and thaw.

Underneath yon glassy ocean  
Which the five-fold nails transfix,  
Looms a god's form without motion  
Strained as on a crucifix ;



From his chin the beard is streaming,  
Over breast and shoulder gleaming ;  
    Grey grey hairs and glacier mix.

And the sculptured limbs Titanic,  
    'Neath that ribbed transparent veil,  
Elemental yet organic,  
    Quiver not, nor flinch, nor quail ;  
Though 'twixt crag and ice in anguish  
They are doomed for aye to languish,  
    Though those tears shall never fail.

Ah Prometheus ! Friend and master !  
    Dost thou still endure for us  
Thy perpetual disaster  
    On the cliffs of Caucasus ?  
Shall new creeds and new gods waken  
Hope for men, while thou forsaken  
    Still must weep and suffer thus ?

Shall thy fount of tears, still flowing,  
    Freezing still, for ever run,  
Waning, waxing, wasting, growing,  
    Prisoning thee from stars and sun ?  
Kinder surely were Jove's vulture  
Than this death-in-life sepulture,  
    Pitied, scorned, and shared by none !

Thus I cried ; but day new-risen  
Pierced the ice, and I could see  
That encased in that cold prison  
Lay a mummied mystery ;  
For the old faiths die and dwindle  
With each twirl of Clotho's spindle,  
And she spins eternally.

Yea, our faiths fade ; and the older  
Gods who groaned and bled for men,  
Turn to stone and ice ; they moulder  
Far withdrawn from mortal ken :  
And in dreams and visions lonely  
We revoke their phantoms only,  
Nor bring back our dead again.

IN ITALY,



*AT AMALFI.*

HERE might I rest for ever ; here,  
Till death, inviolate of fear,  
    Descended cloud-like on calm eyes,  
Enjoy the whisper of the waves  
Stealing around those azure caves,  
    The gloom and glory of the skies !

Great mother, Nature, on thy breast  
Let me, unsoiled by sorrow, rest,  
    By sin unstirred, by love made free :  
Full-tried am I by years that bring  
The blossoms of the tardy spring  
    Of wisdom, thine adept to be.

In vain I pray : the wish expires  
Upon my lip, as fade the fires  
    Of youth in withered veins and weak ;  
Not mine to dwell, the neophyte  
Of Nature, in her shrine of light,  
    But still to strive and still to seek.

I have outgrown the primal mirth  
That throbs in air and sea and earth ;  
The world of worn humanity  
Reclaims my care ; at ease to range  
Those hills, and watch their interchange  
Of light and gloom, is not for me.

Dread Pan, to thee I turn : thy soul  
That through the living world doth roll,  
Stirs in our heart an aching sense  
Of beauty, too divinely wrought  
To be the food of mortal thought,  
For earth-born hunger too intense.

Breathless we sink before thy shrine ;  
We pour our spirits forth like wine ;  
With trembling hands we strive to lift  
The veil of airy amethyst,  
That shrouds thy godhood like a mist ;  
Then, dying, forth to darkness drift.

Thy life around us laughs, and we  
Are merged in its immensity ;  
Thy chanted melodies we hear,  
The marrying chords that meet and kiss  
Between two silences ; but miss  
The meaning, though it seems so clear.

From suns that sink o'er silent seas,  
From myrtles neath the mountain breeze  
Shedding their drift of scented snow,

From fleeting hues, from sounds that swoon  
On pathless hills, from night and noon,  
The inarticulate passions flow,

That are thy minions, mighty Pan !  
No priest hast thou ; no muse or man  
Hath ever told, shall ever tell,  
But each within his heart alone,  
Awe-struck and dumb hath learned to own,  
The burden of thine oracle.

---

*LOOKING BACK.*

(AT SORRENTO, MARCH 1864.)

WHY murmur, why look back, my soul ?  
Six long years like an ocean roll  
Between thy youth and thee.  
Thou hast the present ; keep that fast :  
Trust not the future ; drown the past :  
What thou art, learn to be.

Deep orange groves by Naples' shore,  
Warm slopes with laughing olives hoar,  
The myrtle by the bay :  
Bright flowers that in the thickets blow,  
Soft airs that melt the mountain snow,  
Showers weeping silver spray :

All these thou hast ; and dost thou sigh  
For Clifton's oft beclouded sky,  
Her woods and barren down ;  
The tawny strait, the narrow stream,  
The cliff where thou wast wont to dream  
The tumult of the town ;

The old Cathedral, quaint and grey,  
Where stately service, day by day,  
From choir and organ pealed ;  
The little face, loved long ago,  
The thrilling treble, faint and low,  
The pain its music healed ?

The memory of that sacred spring  
Still stirs my soul to sorrowing ;  
She cannot choose but sigh.  
I dwelt as in a magic isle  
With fairy fancies to beguile  
My life's monotony.

Love was the wand I swayed at will :  
Not Ischia's slope nor Capri's hill  
Have joys so fair and free,  
As in that brief enchanted spring  
From every humble household thing  
I fashioned for my glee.

Too soon it fled ; and year by year  
Came slowly trooping care and fear  
Spent powers and clouded faith :



A sorrow to my spirit clung—  
A pang, not mine, whose poison stung  
The soul it could not scathe.

Nor health nor hope remained ; I fled  
From land to land ; my weary head  
In strangers' homes I laid :  
And now, by fair Sorrento's bay,  
I sit and sigh this sweet spring day,  
Beneath the olive shade.

The birds may murmur as they will,  
The kids may leap upon the hill,  
The wavelets on their sand :  
But I must bear an even heart,  
Proof against pain or passion's smart ;  
Unstirred, unshaken, stand.

Once more I will begin to live ;  
The future much may have to give ;  
Her face I cannot see ;  
But feel as though the past had been  
Played out unto its utmost scene,  
The stage swept clear and free.

Bid memory with each rolling year  
Fold fainter wings, and disappear ;  
Then wrap thy soul in strength :  
There's rest beneath the weltering wave ;  
There's rest in heaven though storms may rave ;  
Thou too shalt rest at length.

*LINES WRITTEN ON THE ROOF OF  
MILAN CATHEDRAL.*

‘A mount of marble, a hundred spires.

THE long, long night of utter loneliness,  
Of conflict, pain, defeat, and sore distress,  
Hath vanished ; and I stand as one whose life  
Wages with death a scarcely winning strife,  
Here on this mount of marble. Like a sea  
Waveless and blue, the sky's transparency  
Bathes spire and statue. Was it man or God  
Who built these domes, whereon the feet have trod  
Of eve and night and morn with rose and gold  
And silver and strange symbols manifold  
Of shadow? Fabric not of stone but mist  
Or pearl or cloud beneath heaven's amethyst  
Glitters the marvel : cloud congealed to shine  
Through centuries with lustre crystalline ;  
Pearl spiked and fretted like an Orient shell ;  
Mist on the frozen fern-wreaths of a well.  
Not God's but man's work this : God's yonder fane,  
Reared on the distant limit of the plain,  
From azure into azure, to blue sky  
Shooting from vapours blue that folded lie

Round valley-basements, robed in royal snow,  
Wherefrom life-giving waters leaping flow,  
Aerial Monte Rosa !—God and man  
Confront each other, with this narrow span  
Of plain to part them, try what each can do  
To make applauding Seraphs from the blue  
Lean marvel-smitten, or alight with song  
Upon the glittering peaks, or clustering throng  
The spacious pathways. God on man's work here  
Hath set His signature and symbol clear ;  
Man's soul that thinks and feels, to God's work there  
Gives life, which else were cold and dumb and bare.  
God is man's soul ; man's soul a spark of God :  
By God in man the dull terrestrial clod  
Becomes a thing of beauty ; thinking man  
Through God made manifest, outrival can  
His handiwork of nature. Do we dream  
Mingling reality with things that seem ?  
Or is it true that God and man appear  
One soul in sentient art self-conscious here,  
One soul o'er senseless nature stair by stair  
Raised to create by comprehending there ?

---

*IN VENICE.*

## I.

## THE INVITATION TO THE GONDOLA.

COME forth ; for Night is falling,  
The moon hangs round and red  
On the verge of the violet waters,  
Fronting the daylight dead.

Come forth ; the liquid spaces  
Of sea and sky are as one,  
Where outspread angel flame-wings  
Brood o'er the buried sun.

Bells call to bells from the islands,  
And far-off mountains rear  
Their shadowy crests in the crystal  
Of cloudless atmosphere.

A breeze from the sea is wafted ;  
Lamp-litten Venice gleams  
With her towers and domes uplifted  
Like a city seen in dreams.

Her water-ways are atremble  
With melody far and wide,

Borne from the phantom galleys  
That o'er the darkness glide.

There are stars in heaven, and starry  
Are the wandering lights below :  
Come forth! for the Night is calling,  
Sea, city, and sky are aglow !

## II.

## THE PONTE DI PARADISO.

## PRELUDE.

Of all the mysteries wherethrough we move,  
This is the most mysterious—that a face,  
Seen peradventure in some distant place,  
Whither we can return no more to prove  
The world-old sanctities of human love,  
Shall haunt our waking thoughts, and gathering grace  
Incorporate itself with every phase  
Whereby the soul aspires to God above.  
Thus are we wedded through that face to her  
Or him who bears it ; nay, one fleeting glance,  
Fraught with a tale too deep for utterance,  
Even as a pebble cast into the sea,  
Will on the deep waves of our spirit stir  
Ripples that run through all eternity.

## THEME.

This is the bridge of Paradise :  
    'Twas here he lay,  
Gazing with large and earnest eyes  
    That summer day.

Twelve years since then have flown, and yet  
    I seem to see  
From yon smooth marble parapet  
    Him smile at me.

Once more, a living god, he stands,  
    Flings back his hair ;  
Lifts his strong arms, and spreads his hands  
    To the warm air.

I know not what electric thrill,  
    'Twixt me and him,  
Shot with a sudden ache that still  
    Makes daylight dim.

Only those dark and steadfast eyes,  
    Where the soul shone,  
When I awake in Paradise  
    Will greet my own.

## EPILOGUE.

Soul cries to soul, as star to sundered star  
Calls through the void of intermediate night ;  
And as each tiniest spark of stellar light  
Includes a world where moving myriads are,  
Thus every glance seen once and felt afar  
Symbols an universe : the spirit's might  
Leaps through the gazing eyes, with infinite  
Pulsations that no lapse of years can mar,  
He therefore dwells within me still ; and I  
Within him dwell ; though neither clasp of hand  
Nor interchange of converse made us one :  
And it shall surely be that when we die,  
In God shall both see clear and understand  
What soul to soul spake, sun to brother sun.

## III.

## IN THE SMALL CANALS.

Love, felt from far, long sought, scarce found,  
On thee I call ;  
Here where with silvery silent sound  
The smooth oars fall ;

Here where the glimmering water-ways,  
Above yon stair,  
Mirror one trembling lamp that plays  
In twilight air !

What sights, what sounds, O poignant Love  
Ere thou wert flown,  
Quivered these darksome waves above,  
In darkness known !

I dare not dream thereof ; the sting  
Of those dead eyes  
Is too acute and close a thing  
For one who dies.

Only I feel through glare and gloom,  
Where yon lamp falls,  
Dim spectres hurrying to their doom,  
And Love's voice calls :

'Twas better thus toward death to glide,  
Soul-full of bliss,  
Than with long life unsatisfied  
Life's crown to miss.

---



*VINTAGE.*

I FOUND him lying neath the vines that ran  
 Grape-laden o'er grey frames of oak and beech ;  
 A fair and jocund Faun, whose beard began,  
 Like dewy down on quince or blushing peach,  
 To soften chin and cheek. He bade me reach  
 My hand to his, and drew me through the screen  
 Of clusters intertwined with glistening green.

Sunrise athwart us fell—a living fire,  
 That touching turned our tendrilled roof to red ;  
 Network of shade from many a flickering spire  
 And solid orb upon the youth was shed ;  
 With purple grapes and white his comely head  
 Was crowned, and in his hand a bunch he pressed  
 Against the golden glory of his breast.

Gourds with the grapes, and hops, and serpentine  
 Wreaths of blue bindweed tangling built a bower,  
 Where lying we could watch 'twixt vine and vine  
 Young men and maidens move, and singing shower  
 On wattled crates the fruit whose hoary flower  
 With dew still glistened ; for the kiss of night  
 Lay yet on vale and mountain misty-bright.

Some trod the press; some climbed the elms that hung  
 Vine-burdened ; and beneath, a beardless boy  
 Tuning his melancholy lute-strings sung

A wild shrill song, that spake of only joy,  
But was so sad that virgins cold and coy  
Melted, and love mid sorrow-sweetness fell  
On careless hearts that felt the powerful spell.

---

*THE MYRTLE BOUGH.*

ON this low shore where Lericì  
Still dreams of her dead Cyprian queen,  
A myrtle rod I break for thee,  
White flowers and dark leaves ever green.

I know not whether Love or Death  
Be symbolled by the branch I raise ;  
Both Love and Death could claim a wreath  
Of myrtle in those ancient days.

Take then the leaves and let them crown  
In some still hour his brows and thine ;  
But lay the moon-white blossoms down,  
A sacrifice to Proserpine.

So shalt thou pledge, thy friend and thou,  
That old Eumenidean troth,  
Of love through life the binding vow  
Sworn unto death who waits for both.

*HENDECASYLLABLES.*

O THE beautiful eyes of contadini !  
 O the ring of their voices on the hill-sides !  
 O their gravity, grace of antique movement—  
 Driving furrows athwart the autumnal cornland,  
 Poised like statues above the laden axles  
 Drawn by tardy majestic oxen homewards !  
 What large melody fills you, ye divine youths,  
 Meet companions of old Homeric heroes ?  
 Ah, to vanish in mist upon your foreheads,  
 Melt in airiest films of vapour round you,  
 Dwell unseen unattended at your hearth-stone,  
 If I whelmed in the mist and murk of illness,  
 If I clogged with the pains and pangs of ages,  
 Worn and torn into shreds by hopes that wither,  
 Could but gain for a guerdon and recapture  
 Rhythms felt by the soul in antenatal  
 Hours æonian orbéd with ancient music !  
 These I, gazing on you, have half remembered ;  
 These you, thoughtless and all untuned to rapture,  
 Bear in beautiful eyes, ye contadini,  
 Waft in snatches of songs upon the hill-sides,  
 Breathe through stateliest limbs, ye moving statues !

*FAREWELL TO TUSCANY.*

WE pass ; but they remain.  
What though our feet upon this mountain stair ·  
Be upward, backward bent  
Beneath the cold unpitying firmament,  
With stress and strain ;  
Yet all that was so passing fair,  
We leave behind us in the warm transparent air.

We carry memories too :  
Sad phantoms of the days we reckoned dear ;  
Strong tyrannous desires,  
With hands that cling and eyes whose tears are fires :  
The wine is new  
Still on our lips of autumn here,  
Which we too soon shall change for Alpine winter drear.

Florence lies far behind ;  
Her grave grey palace-fronts, her lily towers ;  
The curves of Arno bright  
With star-set lamps that tremble in the night ;  
Her wild west wind,  
That shook those lightning-smitten showers  
And flakes of sunbeams on the pale October flowers.

How far the dancing waves  
Of Spezia, where the silvered olives sleep,

And flower-sprent myrtle sprays  
Sweeten the sunny air by silent bays !  
The calm sea laves  
Those crags—but not for us—and deep  
Dreams on the samphire cliffs and stairs of marble steep.

Ah me ! No more for us  
Spreads the clear world-wide Tuscan land divine ;  
Fold over billowy fold  
Of fertile vale and tower-set mountain old,  
Innumerable  
As crowds of crested waves that shine  
In sun and shadow on the spaceless ocean brine.

Soul-full we said Farewell !  
What time those tears from flying storms were cast  
O'er Thrasymene and thee,  
Loveliest of hills whatever hills may be  
Loved for the spell  
Of names that in the memory last,  
And with strange sweetness link our present to the past !

Mont' Amiata, thou  
Shalt take the envoy of this sorrow-song !  
For thou still gazest down  
On Chiusi, and Siena's marble crown,  
The bare hill-brow  
Where gleams Cortona, and the strong  
Light of the lands I love, the lands for which I long.

*IN VAL BREGAGLIA.*

'Tis the death of the year ; a fretful wind  
Sways the willow wands to and fro ;  
For the grey green olives are left behind,  
And we climb to the land of frost and snow.

The leaves on the chestnut boughs are brown,  
Dry with summer and drenched with rain,  
And the walnut leaves come tumbling down  
On the grass that cannot revive again.

The streams are swollen, livid of hue ;  
Plague has smitten the speckled vines :  
For the grapes are gathered, and mouldy blue  
Covers the stake where the tendril twines.

It rains in gusts, and the stealthy snow  
Soaks yon summit above the larch ;  
The world was warmer with hope, I know,  
When we crossed these gates of the Alps in March.

Here and there on the gaunt grey stones  
Creepers, crimson with early cold,  
Glare like tinsel among dead bones  
Of kings that rot in their tombs of gold.

Onward and upward, stair by stair,  
    Toiling drowsily, slow but sure,  
By the drizzling rocks in the dismal air,  
    We fix our face like a flint and endure.

Winter has six months where we dwell,  
    Snow-drifts cover us, wrap us round ;  
To sleep and to slumber is very well,  
    But we long for sight and we pine for sound.

Dream then ! Life is nought but a dream !  
    Learn oblivion, and cease to think  
Of the midnight lamps that flicker and gleam  
    By the bridges there on the Arno's brink.





IMELDA LAMBERTAZZI.



*IMELDA LAMBERTAZZI.*

OF the worst woe that on Bologna fell  
Stirring the bitter seeds of hate and hell,  
This was the cause. The Lambertazzi fed  
Fierce feud with that great house whose mighty head  
Was Giano Gieremei ; square and street  
Clanked with their horses' hooves and mailed feet,  
And o'er the lowly city roofs there rose  
Tower against tower, the haunt of jealous foes,  
Who glared with hungry eyes from grates of steel,  
And ground live curses from their iron heel ;  
Nor, though each sought pretence and cause of fight,  
For all their venomous hate and wordy spite,  
Had the feud blossomed into public war,  
But lingered yet upon the dubious bar  
Of private strife ; till Giano's only son,  
Young Boniface, than whom no fairer one  
Moved hearts of maidens in the month of May,  
Beheld Imelda, daughter of the grey  
Orlando Lambertazzi. How they met,  
Or what deep spell in sundered bosoms set

Fair Love, I know not ; for my story saith  
This only, that their Love was strong as Death,  
Growing three winters with their growth till blight  
Fell on the blossoms of their bridal night.

---

On May day in the Marches Amorous  
Which lie outside Bologna, from her house  
Built o'er the city wall, Imelda spied  
Boniface arrayed in knightly splendour ride  
Through the armed lists : upon his glittering crest  
Sat valour plumed, the while with lance in rest  
Atilt he ran ; and one man praised his steed,  
And one his spear, and one his wondrous speed ;  
Yea, and some spake of skill or strength of limb,—  
Though, sooth to say, the strength that dwelt in him  
Lay not in thews or sinews, and his skill  
Was simple ; but his eyes had drunk their fill  
Of grey eyes parted from him, and he moved  
Within the airy sphere of her he loved ;  
Whence he took wondrous puissance, and became  
Less like a man that breathes, than like a flame  
That pierceth where it listeth, and doth run  
With fiercer might than aught beneath the sun.  
So at the tourney's ending heralds cried :  
' A Gieremei ; Boniface doth ride  
Lord of the lists ! nor is there any might  
Of man or steed to match with his in fight !'  
The youth unclasped his visor from the chin,

Loosened the straps of steel to let light in,  
And shook his curls free—sunny-warm and brown  
Over his throat of mail they tumbled down ;  
Then in the level sunlight gleaming red,  
He raised the splendour of his princely head :  
Love shone upon his cheek, Love in his eyes  
Danced, as he reined his steed to take the prize  
The May-queen reached him, bowed, and thundered on,  
Through list and tent and gilt pavilion,  
Unto Imelda's dwelling. There I ween  
He stayed awhile, and on his brow serene  
Might men have read this message : ' 'Tis for thee  
I bear the guerdon of my victory ;  
This scarf is thine, not hers who gave it me !'  
Yea, though they durst not speak, lest men should guess  
The secret of their love, yet none the less  
Heart sang to heart, and depth to depth within  
Their sundered souls cried loud above the din  
Of shouting crowds—as through the dissonant noise  
Confused of mad waves shrills a human voice.  
Then Boniface rode on, and well might men  
Swear that he wore a glory round him then,  
More like a saint than like a simple man—  
Julian or Michael or Sebastian.

---

Story saith not how thenceforth hour by hour  
Of Love the wild intoxicating flower

Budded and blossomed and grew ripe and shed  
Its passionate petals upon youth and maid.  
May nights, May mornings, liliated lawns that drank  
Dews honey-fragrant, stars that rose and sank,  
With moonlight and shrill birds among the showers  
Of tremulous cream-white acacia flowers,  
Whispers and stolen words and hurried sighs,  
And kisses sweet as dreams of Paradise,  
Ta'en by damned souls asleep who wake to see  
Hell round them red with restless agony,—  
These were the ways whereby at length they came  
To dream of life as of a fitful flame,  
Whereof the burning and the beam are fair  
Though whirlwinds rave around in the dim air.  
Wherefore of fear they took no heed, and grew  
Hourly of aught that might their bliss undo  
Less thoughtful ; but of all that might increase  
The joy they had and plenitude of peace,  
Desire more dear and longing more intense  
Devoured their hearts with blissful vehemence.  
So that in Love's audacity at length  
They trusted blindly to the single strength  
Of joy, that on the lover's shoulder lays  
Wings like the wings of eagles, and doth raise  
His heart aloft to venture and endure,  
Mid swords and flames bearing a soul secure.  
At last when many days and nights gone by  
Had cradled fear in frail tranquillity,  
And love grew sore between them, and desire

Withered their young souls with a breath of fire,  
And each toward each yearned with strong thirst to be  
Wedded in soul and flesh unchangeably,  
Smiling they swore that not another day  
Should dawn within the womb of flowery May,  
Ere of love's well the deepest draught they drew,  
And of love's lore the truest truth they knew.  
Therefore at night, not long past twilight time,  
Was Boniface the trellised wall to climb  
Beneath Imelda's window, and—ah then,  
Hidden away from envious eyes of men,  
Having no thought of what might be, to take  
The blossoms of the hours for sweet Love's sake.

---

He came : he clomb : the while upon her spray  
Quivering the wild-voiced nightingale of May  
Made music, nor stayed aught of her shrill cry,  
For all that up the vine-boughs eagerly  
Love-led he flew—so swift as swallow's flight  
The feet that bore him to his heart's delight.  
But one there was beneath, blear-eyed and grey,  
Squatting within the cypress shade that lay  
O'er lilies on the fair grass-plot below  
Imelda's window :—cold as midnight snow,  
With shrunken thews and withered eyes that strain  
On death to rid them of their lifelong pain,  
Hungry and hating all, this woman was .

A hag from whom the glad folk, as they pass,  
Turn with unreckoned loathing, while strange fear  
Curdles their veins despite the blooming year.  
She saw : and forasmuch no pain was worse  
Than sight of joy that never might be hers,  
And since she knew within that window gay  
With flowers that blossom in the birth of May,  
What rose of womanhood made misery seem  
The idle shadow of an empty dream  
To him who scaled so nimbly with such glee  
The friendly vine-boughs of the balcony,—  
How could she choose but rising with frore fire  
In palsied limbs, the graves of dead desire,  
Thank Hell who sent her thus midmost the curse  
Of life that nothing knew twixt bad or worse,  
Heart-sweet accomplishment of yearning hate  
And recompense for waste years desolate?  
Chuckling from shade to shade she softly stole,  
And bent her ear beneath the vine-tree bole,  
If haply from the window some love-word  
Might mingle with the wild song of the bird.  
A little laugh she heard, and ‘ Art thou here ?  
Oh overbold ! ’ Nor more ; for now the cheer  
Those lovers made, needed not words, but bliss  
Seemed blent and buried in a wilderness  
Soul-full of kisses. Then the witch flung wide  
Her shrivelled arms, and dropped no tears, but cried  
A low short cry : whereat the nightingale  
Stilled on his spray, and therewithal the pale



Face of the moon forth gliding looked upon  
A writhen face with hate and anguish wan.—  
Why tell of pain and envy and the rage  
That trembles in the nerveless breast of age ?  
The path lay plain before her : forth she went,  
Her weak feet steadied with a fixed intent,  
And told her tale, and sowed the seed whereof  
Sprang hell-fierce flowers of strength to stifle love.

---

It was a little room wherein the twain  
Drank deep of bliss they ne'er should drink again.  
Latticed with fretwork of frail tracery,  
The upper casement dimmed the lucid sky  
With violet, gules, and gold, and chrysopras,  
Wherethrough pale stars in vain would peer and pass ;  
But all below was open wide, and white  
Into the chamber streamed the free moonlight ;  
So that the arras-work, more faint and grey  
With ghostly shapes than in the noon of day,  
Showed Lancelot's love and Galahad and her  
Who sold her soul for joy, Queen Guinever ;  
And in an angle of the wall there spread  
Stainless with brodered blooms the maiden's bed.  
Thereby those lovers communed, and all bliss  
The world might yield seemed hollow matched with this.  
'O Love !' she cried mid kisses, 'if to-night  
Death touched my flower of life with his keen blight,

Thus would I choose to die, thus clasping thee  
To pass into that cold uncertainty !  
For this were peace ; nor would I dread at all  
The ways unknown where icy shadows fall,  
If I might take at least this touch of thee  
And thy clasped palm, nor lose all memory  
Of that sweet strength which from my soul hath banned  
What fear soe'er across my path should stand.'  
And laughing he : ' O love, my love, of Death  
What sayst thou, sweetest ? Sure he tarrieth  
Far off on shores forgotten ; nought I know  
Of him or his, save that the short nights go  
More softly when the velvet wings of sleep,  
His brother, fold our souls in slumber deep.'  
And she again : ' Thus heart to heart, and breast  
In bliss eternal on broad bosom pressed,  
And lip with lip, and voice with voice, and breath  
With deep breath mingling, well may cast out Death ;  
For how can henceforth aught between us come,  
Where in our close embrace no little room  
Is left for thought to sunder us or be  
A rift within our souls' felicity ?'  
What said they who shall sing, or tell the tales,  
Concordant with the love-lorn nightingale's,  
They told each other of sure bliss afar  
In lands which they would fly to, where the bar  
Of hate ancestral like thin gossamer  
Should fail from out their heavens and leave love clear ?  
Long murmured they and whispered ; word by word

Was answered by the sleepless song that stirred  
Within the thick acacia bowers, and faint  
About their foreheads flew the flowery scent.

---

Meanwhile the brothers of Imelda, three  
Stout knights with hearts as rough as the rude sea,  
Listened within their hall to what the crone  
Told them ; and much they thought and spake thereon,  
Till in their souls the sword of hate was strong :  
Yet waited they, thinking that sleep ere long  
Would fall on Boniface within the bed  
Of her, no more their sister. So night sped.

---

And now the moon was sinking, and the twain  
Had drunk the bliss they ne'er should drink again :  
And sleep that follows on the paths of joy,  
Had spread his silken wings o'er maid and boy.  
Inarmed they slumbered ; young-eyed stars of May  
Across the narrow window gliding grey,  
Gazed on their tranquil beauty : golden hair  
Limb-long, with brown curls blending, wove a snare  
Wherein both souls were prisoned, and their sighs  
Breathed even in dreams of love that satisfies.  
Then to the lattice, by the selfsame way  
By which that lover in the death of day

Love-led had mounted, came the brothers three,  
Led by no love but hate and treachery.  
Silent and stealthy, in sheathed mail, they clomb,  
And one by one within the little room  
Alighted ; nor for all that peril near,  
Fell there the shadow of a coming fear  
Across Imelda's dreaming heart, but deep  
And still she breathed within the gates of sleep.  
Nor Boniface beside her dreaming knew  
By any shuddering of the soul or dew  
Of horror on chilled brows, how gaunt and grim  
Were those fierce hungry eyes that glared on him.  
But as they sighed and smiled, the tremulous star  
Of morn uprising from the Eastern bar  
Of day's birth, shed dim light on them and made  
More pure the peace wherein their souls were laid.—  
Then spake the eldest brother : ' Shall we slay  
A man's soul in the bloom and birth of May ?  
He is too fair ; shall we not learn at length  
That Love is stronger than Hate's strongest strength ? '  
Then spake the second : ' If to kill were wise,  
'Twere wiser surely thus to take the prize,  
And keep my lady's minion for a pledge,  
Nor blunt with innocent blood the blameless edge  
Of our good cause : for lo ! this Boniface  
Hath with the common folk such store of grace,  
That slaying him we slay whate'er of right  
Sustains us fearless in the people's sight.'  
' Peace ! ' spake the youngest ; and this single word,

Between set lips and clenched teeth hissing, stirred  
The sanctity of silence like a snake  
That coils scarce seen within the quivering brake.  
Then from his broidered belt with sudden hand  
He drew an ivory-sheathed bright-burnished brand,  
Whereof the hilt was one huge agate wrought  
Into shapes terrible surpassing thought;  
Yea, and the blade envenomed had drunk dew  
Distilled from Upas flowers and Indian yew.  
This without further sign or word he drave  
Into the sleeping man :—one groan he gave,  
And from Imelda turned his head, and lay  
Heavy and still beneath the twilight grey:  
Nor did she wake, but turned with him, and laid  
Her face upon his breast, and smiled, and said  
In sleep fond inarticulate few words,  
Like drowsy twitterings of half-wakened birds.  
Then from the smitten corpse those brothers three  
Withdrew the poisoned sword, and silently,  
E'en as they came, with hungry hate assuaged,  
Went forth ; while dawn her winning battle waged  
With darkness, and aloft the splendour flew  
Of day into the cold irradiate blue.

---

Then 'neath the lattice on the garden green  
A little page, the tulip rows between,  
Went singing for mere joy to think that day

Had bloomed once more within the womb of May :  
Carols he sang and snatches of old song,  
Wherein the airy thoughts of music throng ;  
Nor knew he well whereof he sang, but glee  
Flooded his soul, and life was melody :—

When thou wert born, O beaming star !  
Three holy angels flew to earth ;  
And three kings from the east afar  
Brought gold and jewels of great worth ;  
Three eagles on wings light as air  
Bore the news East and West and North ;  
O jewel fair, O jewel rare,  
So glad was heaven to greet thy birth !

Thus sang he ; and his voice that rose and shrilled  
Upon the ending of the stanza, thrilled  
Imelda's ear ; so that her honeyed slumber,  
Like rose leaves over-bloomed, which dews encumber,  
Or faint winds fret, fluttered and fell apart,  
And in the golden sunlight her glad heart  
Throbbled with quick life beneath her bosom's snow :  
'Up, Boniface ! my lover ! dost thou know  
That night is o'er, and men begin to tread  
The city ways : I fear me day hath sped  
Now a full hour : hearest thou not ? Ah me !  
Wilt thou not wake ?'—Then seemed it suddenly  
As though some sleep deeper than dreams were dull  
On his closed lids and pale cheeks beautiful.—

She chafed his hands ; their palms were cold as death :  
His mouth she kissed ; no warm and delicate breath  
Flew forth to greet her, and no smile delayed  
Responsive kisses on those lips like lead.—  
Breathless she rose, silent, ash-pale, her hair  
Rippling around her moon-white shoulders fair :  
With firm set teeth, with stony eyes she stood ;  
And now she leaned, and now she knelt ; for blood,  
Black, stealthy, slowly soaking, oozed and ran  
Adown the marble bosom of the man.—  
Then from his breast the linen shred by shred  
She tore, and on his side and shoulder dead  
She bent her ear and listened : tense and shrill  
Beat her own heart, like crickets in the still  
Of summer eves that madden ; but no sob  
Of life that lingered, nay, no little throb  
Of fluttering pulses whispered hope, for he  
Lay stiff in death's insensibility.—  
Then first she groaned : yea, then she shrieked ; and mad  
With some fierce wish that made her spirit glad,  
She fell upon her lord ; and first his mouth  
She kissed as bees, what time the rainy South  
Woos violet buds, kiss meadow flowers in May,  
As though they ne'er might leave them ; then she lay  
Limb-length beside him, with her arms enwreathed  
His heavy waist, and pressed his wound, and breathed  
Warm life upon its gory lips, and drank  
The dews of Death thence-forth that dripped and sank.—  
Ah me ! from those now quenched wells within

The frozen veins what hope had she to win  
Fresh youth—or did she dream that she might bring  
The breath back to his breast by whispering?—  
Nay, not so : rather think that she was ware  
How that the poison lurked and lingered there ;  
Yea, when with wild delirious haste she quaffed  
That cup of blood, and stayed her lips, and laughed,  
Then drank again, then laid her face down low  
Beside her lord and waited, well I know  
That she on Death was calling : ‘ Gentle Death,  
For whom my widowed spirit wearieth,  
Come quickly, dear, delicious Death, and bring  
Solace eternal for my sorrowing ! ’  
Nor was Death far, or heavy-eared, or slow  
To send the last kind unconvulsive throe,  
Whereby her spirit passed and was at rest  
In the third sphere with him she loved the best.

---

So when three hours were sped, and now the sun  
High o’er the city towers in splendour shone,  
Those brothers conscious of the deed of sin  
Chafed in their palace hall, seeking to win  
Assurance from conjecture, marvelling how  
Imelda in her bower were weeping now ;  
And much they feared to drag the comely dead  
Forth to the square, or lay that golden head  
Before the eyes of all their foes and all



The folk who loved him in his father's hall.  
 Then while they sat and spake and pondered sore,  
 Shrilling through chamber-roof and corridor  
 A shriek arose, and feet confused were heard  
 With arms that clashed, and many a windy word,  
 Tossed on the crests of tumult, caught their ears  
 In waifs and strays : ' Imelda !—Nay, she stirs !—  
 I say she stirs not—and slain Boniface !—  
 Dead like a dog for all his golden grace—  
 Nay, fellow, help !—What ho ! go call the Lords !  
 Here by my faith is need for spears and swords !'  
 So shrilled torn voices : then the tramp of feet  
 Swifter and louder knelled ; the arrowy sleet  
 Of vain complaint and querulous surprise  
 Surged closer ; then before their wolfish eyes—  
 The door flung open and the palace hall  
 Flooded with frantic men from wall to wall—  
 Staggered the bearers of the piteous dead.  
 They to the dais came, and stood, and laid  
 Before his foes not Boniface alone,  
 But pale Imelda—pale with cold arms thrown  
 Still round her lover's waist, and lips where yet  
 The poison of the flower of Death was set.—  
 O ruddy mouth ! O rose with kisses red !  
 O golden hair o'er breast and shoulder shed,  
 Like sunbright showers on snow ere day be dead !—  
 Nor space was now for question or debate :  
 Already rumour from the palace gate  
 Flew fire-mouthed through the city.—' Part the dead !'

Cried Nino Lambertazzi :—so they spread  
Mantles of silk and rare brocades, with gems  
Encased in gold upon their broidered hems,  
Around Imelda ; and for Boniface  
They made a bier and bore him from the place  
Breast-downward, covered with thick sable palls ;  
Nor did they take him to his father's halls,  
But laid him in St. Dominic where slept  
The Gieremei in their marble crypt.

---

There priests received the corpse, and trembling cried  
' This man, though dead, the city will divide.'  
Then did those holy men search limb by limb  
To see if haply they might succour him ;  
And washed his wound that was so thin and slight,  
And raised him in the merry morning light,  
High on a bier 'twixt burning line and line  
Of tapers flickering in the hot sunshine.  
Naked his breast was that all eyes might see  
Those livid lips above his heart, and be  
Stirred to just wrath and righteous enmity.  
Bare was his face and throat ; rebellious hair  
Nut-brown above his forehead clustered fair ;  
That men might seem to hear his mute mouth cry  
On bloody vengeance from the indignant sky.  
Morn wore to noon and noon to eve, while thick  
Through all the aisles of stern St. Dominic

The people muttering gathered, and the kin  
Of Gieremei mid the hollow din  
Hung like a thunder-cloud apart; and barred  
In steel above them Giano towered. His hard  
Keen features from the visor gleamed like steel,  
While on the calm cold corpse he gazed—one heel  
Firm on the marble floor, the other stayed  
Against the planks whereon the bier was laid.  
Then, as the twilight thickened, fiery flared  
On his set face the torchlight, glowed and glared  
About his hauberk, kindled flames of hell  
Within his tearless eyes and terrible ;—  
So that men whispered that some dreadful thing  
The night or morrow's light would surely bring.

---

This while Imelda like an Eastern queen,  
With velvet robes and jewels well beseen,  
Her fair lids closed as if in sleep, her hair  
With silken threads and pearl embroideries rare  
Wrought by tirewomen, lay in solemn state  
Amid the Lambertazzi. Their swollen hate  
Ceased not, but grew and gathered, now that chance  
Had burst the bonds of hollow sufferance.  
Much clamoured they of vengeance ; yea they spake  
Aloud of wrong, and sware for honour's sake  
To flesh keen swords on kith and kin of him,  
Who with his philtres, charms, and teraphim

Had sown strange longing and desire unblest  
In the pure garden of the maiden's breast.—  
Thus Hate blaspheming Love's unblemished bliss,  
Warped the fair truth to foul lies meaningless.

There too night came. With torches burning red  
And sable stoles o'er helm and cuirass spread,  
The Lambertazzi raised the bier, and through  
The city streets went chanting ; honey-dew  
Dropped from spring-flowers and roses leaning o'er  
Grey garden-walls of convents, while they bore  
That marble maid with orient jewels bright  
And silken splendour in the fierce torchlight:—  
O crimson flames that turned the faint stars dim !—  
While long resounding psalm and funeral hymn  
From those deep-chested iron-throated men  
Growled like hoarse thunder-rolls above the din  
Of spurs on pavement clanking and clashed mail.—  
I ween that night the love-lorn nightingale  
Quaked voiceless.—Thus amid the surge and roar  
Of Misereres and bells tolling o'er  
The troubled city, the armed mourners came  
To San Petronio. Robed in sullen flame  
The murky aisles and arches, row by row,  
Disclosed above them, as with hushed steps slow  
Into the choir they marched, and mid the crowd  
Of praying priests set the bier down, and bowed  
Their brows revengeful. Then the mass on high  
With book and bell was raised religiously—

So that it grew the Body of Very God,  
Who took our flesh and cross-crowned Calvary trod ;  
And on that Body 'twixt the gloom and glare  
The kith and kin of slain Imelda sware  
No second night should come, but blood should be  
Spilled for her innocent sake abundantly.  
Then to the crypted vault, the while priests sung,  
And censers fraught with spice in cadence swung,  
She who so loved that Love was strong as Death,  
Sank slowly, as the sun that minisheth  
His might at fall of eve, through ocean's floor  
Sinks ; and her maiden sweetness never more  
Was seen by man or woman ; but they bore,  
Who watched her sinking thus from glare to gloom,  
The sad sweet memory with them to the tomb.

---

Thus was Imelda buried ; and that night  
Bologna rang through all her streets with might  
Of armed men ; and for days and weeks the fray  
Stayed not but swelled ; and years thereafter May  
Returning saw new strife with old strife blent  
In Hell-deep Heaven-wide interminglement.—  
Wherefore my story well saith that the grace  
Of fair Imelda and young Boniface  
Wrought for their city wrong and sore distress.



LYRICS OF LIFE AND ART.

*PART II.*





*FROM FRIEND TO FRIEND.*

DEAR friend, I know not if such days and nights  
Of fervent comradeship as we have spent,  
Or if twin minds with equal ardour bent  
To search the world's unspeakable delights,  
Or if long hours passed on Parnassian heights  
Together in rapt interminglement  
Of heart with heart on thought sublime intent,  
Or if the spark of heaven-born fire that lights  
Love in both breasts from boyhood, thus have wrought  
Our spirits to communion ; but I swear  
That neither chance nor change nor time nor aught  
That makes the future of our lives less fair,  
Shall sunder us who once have breathed this air  
Of soul-commingling friendship passion-fraught.

*AN UNDERTONE.*

If ye will raise me to the poet's throne,  
And place me mid the minstrels in that shrine  
Which hath no limit save the infinite zone  
Of the sphered ether calm and crystalline,  
Set on my brow no crown of stars, but twine  
Spring's palest leaves and flowers, and let me be  
Last and least felt of all that company.

Yea, seated on the lowest step of all,  
Like some still singing child of Giambellin,  
For whom the rays of living gold that fall  
On saints and smiling babe and heavenly queen,  
Are tempered into twilight, let me lean  
My forehead on my hand, and muse, and stay  
Lost in the lustre of their quenchless day.

Yet when we tire of greatness, when our eyes  
Ache with the painter's vision, it may chance  
That in the pictured melodist there lies  
Some virtue to refresh our heart, some glance  
From his mute musing forehead may entrance  
The soul o'er-burdened with the stately thought  
Which in those awful forms august is wrought.

So on my singing, when your spirits tire  
Of Dante's rapture, or your thrilling ear  
Aches with the ecstasies of Milton's choir,  
Rest some brief minute ; leave those heavens, and hear  
The little earthly music, faint yet clear ;  
I shall be blest, and ye shall bear away  
Some frailest echo of my whispered lay.

And ye shall think of me perchance, when love  
Swells your strong hearts with life's deliciousness ;  
Yea, from the gloom my soul shall lean and move  
Toward you, and my lips your mouth shall press,  
And you shall feel my earnest eyes, and bless  
The solitary singer who was fain  
To weave weak rhymes that soothe and stir your pain.

Do not forget me ! In the laurelled crowd  
That pace Fame's temple, I shall not be found ;  
Nor shall my quivering voice of song be loud  
Mid the rapt harmonies that rise and sound  
The lofty roof and ringing domes around ;  
But in the interval one note that's mine,  
May make the sacred silence more divine.

*IN WANDERSTUNDEN GESCHRIEBEN.*

FOR those who fain would weep  
Music shall summon sleep :  
On dull watch-wasted eyes  
Clear morning beams arise :  
And night at length is sweet  
To travel-weary feet :  
But for the soul that hath no hope  
Heavenward ascending summits slope,  
And downward deep as Hell  
Yawn gulfs immeasurable ;  
Soaring or sinking, there is nought  
But Death to stay the stress of thought.

---

*THE BIRTH OF A STAR.*

WITHIN the voiceless confines of the void,  
Where worlds begin to breathe, and Uriel spheres  
The formless fruitage of chaotic years  
Into fixed orbs that shall not be destroyed,

There dwells a planet. On the ocean buoyed  
Of everduring darkness, from her peers  
Sundered, and ringed around with calm, she hears  
The symphony of stars, and unemployed

Sleeps on her shadow : till the Sun that fills  
Heaven's concave, with a swift and sudden ray  
Through all her slumbering rondure shooting, thrills

The bulk that indolently lifeless lay ;  
Then stung with quickening impulse toward the rills  
Of light she rushes to roll on for aye.

---

*THE DOOM OF THE SLOTHFUL.*

WHEN through the dolorous city of damned souls  
The Florentine with Virgil took his way,  
A dismal march they passed, whose fetid shoals  
Held sinners by the myriad. Swollen and grey,  
Like worms that fester in the foul decay  
Of sweltering carrion, these bad spirits sank  
Chin-deep in stagnant slime and ooze that stank.

Year after year for ever—year by year,  
Through billions of the centuries that lie  
Like specks of dust upon the dateless sphere  
Of heaven's eternity, they cankering sigh  
Between the black waves and the starless sky ;  
And daily dying have no hope to gain  
By death or change or respite of their pain.

What was their crime, you ask ? Nay, listen : ' We  
Were sullen-sad what time we drank the light

And delicate air, that all day daintily  
Is cheered by sunshine ; for we bore black night  
And murky smoke of sloth, in God's despite,  
Within our barren souls, by discontent  
From joy of all fair things and wholesome pent :

Therefore in this low Hell from jocund sight  
And sound He bans us ; and as there we grew  
Pallid with idleness, so here a blight  
Perpetual rots with slow-corroding dew  
Our poisonous carcase, and a livid hue  
Corpse-like o'erspreads these sodden limbs that take  
And yield corruption to the loathly lake.'

---

*ECHOES.*

*From Ennius.*

HAIL, poet, who for mortal men dost pour  
Strong wine of words that burn and sense that sears,  
Drawn from thy bleeding bosom's fiery core,  
And tempered with the bitter fount of tears.

*From Cleanthes.*

Lead thou me, God, Law, Reason, Duty, Life ;  
All names for thee alike are vain and hollow :  
Lead me, for I will follow without strife,  
Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow.

*From Goethe.*

That nought belongs to me I know  
Save thoughts that never cease to flow  
    From founts that cannot perish,  
And every fleeting shape of bliss  
That kindly fortune lets me kiss  
    And in my bosom cherish.

*From Heine.*

Death is the cool dew-dropping night,  
    Life is the long day's blinding heat;  
    Mine eyelids droop, to sleep were sweet,  
The long long day hath tired me quite.  
Over my bed a linden springs;  
    There sits the nightingale of May;  
    She sings of only love away;  
In dreams I hear the song she sings.

---

## YEARNINGS AFTER THE DESERT.

I WILL arise and go  
Into the desert where no waters flow.  
    There have I dwelt  
    Ere now, and felt  
The pulses of my mother sad and low.

Once more with woven camel's hair  
Will I array my loins, and bare  
My forehead to the whispering night air.  
My food shall be  
Locusts and honey of the wandering bee.

Lo, even as I speak,  
The walls around me break !  
Immeasurable sands arise :  
The night of stars above the pathless plain  
Greets yet again  
With rapture and with radiance my accustomed eyes.

Who am I that so long  
    In Gadara I tarried ?  
Who am I that the song  
    To sweet flutes married  
Of Meleager should have lured me,  
And on sleepy shores immured me ?

'Mid the laurels of Daphne I found  
    The feet of my love :  
The woods of Orontes, around,  
    Beneath and above,  
Were breathing with blossom and singing with sound.

But now, O my mother, I come  
Back to thee, to thy home :  
To the breasts that have nursed me I turn,  
For the milk of thy bosom I yearn.



Why should I so long have listened to the throbbing of  
that breast,  
To that little wrist and forehead fluttering in a soft  
unrest,  
When my mother's mighty pulses, on the desert, in the  
sky,  
Timed their strong and firm vibrations to the cosmic  
harmony?  
O my mother ! lo, I leave her, leave my love, and fly to  
thee :  
O my mother ! wilt thou bless me as of old thou  
blessed'st me ?

Yet how shall I buy from the past  
Oblivion of bliss ?  
And how on my soul shall be cast  
No dream of her kiss ?

Shall I murder the myriads of dreams—  
The fountain that streams  
With endless desire,  
Shall I quench it and quell  
The strength of the fire,  
The fury of Hell ?

No, child ! upon the desert, when I pace  
That sandy waste,  
The burning blossom of thy longed-for face  
Shall make me taste  
Of grief the very bitterness and fierce disgrace.

Farewell ; I go.  
Thou tarriest. Yea, farewell !  
Yet even so  
'Tis well. Yea, fare thee well !

---

*THE CAMERA OBSCURA.*

INSIDE the skull the wakeful brain,  
Attuned at birth to joy and pain,  
Dwells for a lifetime ; even as one  
Who in a closed tower sees the sun  
Cast faint-hued shadows, dim or clear,  
Upon the darkened disc : now near,  
Now far, they flit ; while he, within,  
Surveys the world he may not win :  
Whate'er he sees, he notes ; for nought  
Escapes the net of living thought ;  
And what he notes, he tells again  
To last and build the brains of men.  
Shades are we ; and of shades we weave  
A trifling pleasant make-believe ;  
Then pass into the shadowy night,  
Where formless shades blindfold the light.

---

*PERSONALITY.*

## I.

I KNOW not what I am.—Oh dreadful thought !—  
 Nor know I what my fellow-creatures are :  
 Between me and the world without, a bar  
 Impalpable of adamant is wrought.  
 Each self, from its own self concealed, is caught  
 Thus in a cage of sense, sequestered far  
 From comradeship, calling as calleth star  
 To star across blank intermediate nought.  
 His own self no man sees, and none hath seen  
 His brother's self. Nay, lovers, though they sigh  
 'There is no room for ought to come between  
 'Our blended souls in this felicity,'  
 Starting from sleep, shall find a double screen  
 Built 'twixt two sundered selves—and both must die.

## II.

Yea, both shall carry with them to the void  
 Without, the void more terrible within,  
 Tormented haply by the smart of sin,  
 And cursing what their wilful sense enjoyed.  
 Yet were they free to take or to avoid ?  
 Who knows !—Amid the dull chaotic din

Of wrangling schools which argument can win  
Conviction, when blind faith hath been destroyed ?  
Freedom or servitude ?—So fooled is man  
By blind self-ignorance, he cannot say  
If will alone beneath heaven's azure span  
Its self-determined impulses obey ;  
Or if each impulse, wild as wind at play,  
Be but a cog-wheel in the cosmic plan.

---

### THE WILL.

BLAME not the times in which we live,  
Nor Fortune frail and fugitive ;  
Blame not thy parents, nor the rule  
Of vice or wrong once learned at school ;  
But blame thyself, O man !

Although both heaven and earth combined  
To mould thy flesh and form thy mind,  
Though every thought, word, action, will,  
Was framed by powers beyond thee, still  
Thou art thyself, O man !

And self to take or leave is free,  
Feeling its own sufficiency:  
In spite of science, spite of fate,  
The judge within thee soon or late  
Will blame but thee, O man !

Say not, 'I would, but could not—He  
 'Should bear the blame, who fashioned me—  
 'Call you mere change of motive choice?'—  
 Scorning such pleas, the inner voice  
 Cries, 'Thine the deed, O man !'

---

*ANTINOMIANISM.*

O, LET me love my love and reason not !  
 Why bruise the flower before the fruit is set ?  
 Why prune the bough while the green juices yet  
 Are shooting heavenward into leaf and knot ?  
 What if the fruit be deadly ? Let it be :  
 It is not thine but His who planted thee.  
 Nay, leave the flower to bloom, the rod to rise,  
 The fruit to form and ripen in the skies  
 Warmed with the light of God's unwearying eyes.

Be it enough for thee that thou dost shun  
 No blight He sends thee : when the whirlwinds bend  
 And break thy boughs and all thy blossoms rend,  
 Be patient : should the fierce life-draining sun  
 Strike heavy on thee, bear to feel thy bloom  
 Shrivelled : or in the damp unfruitful gloom  
 Show thy green leaves, and wait. The storms may rave ;  
 Thy stem may sink fire-splintered ; yet be brave ;  
 What He hath sown and planted, He shall save.

*BEATI ILLI.*

BLEST is the man whose heart and hands are pure !  
He hath no sickness that he shall not cure,  
No sorrow that he may not well endure :  
His feet are steadfast and his hope is sure.

Oh, blest is he who ne'er hath sold his soul,  
Whose will is perfect, and whose word is whole,  
Who hath not paid to common sense the toll  
Of self-disgrace, nor owned the world's control !

Through clouds and shadows of the darkest night  
He will not lose a glimmering of the light,  
Nor, though the sun of day be shrouded quite,  
• Swerve from the narrow path to left or right.

---

*LEBENS PHILOSOPHIE.*

IF we were but free to wander  
Light as mountain cloud or air ;  
If our love grew firmer, fonder,  
And our youth were always fair ;  
If no thought of sin or scorning  
Marred the magic of our morning  
If delight expelled despair :

If the dreadful hand of duty  
Lay not on our souls like lead ;  
If the rose of joy and beauty  
Had no thorn wherewith we bled ;  
If we could the world refashion  
Closer to our own heart's passion,  
And resuscitate the dead :

If all ifs were ours for ever ;  
If we held fate in our hand ;  
If without the least endeavour  
We could do whate'er we planned ;—  
Tell us, dear ephemeral lovers,  
Whom a little black earth covers,  
Who at Pluto's footstool stand,

Tell us, could we bear the measure  
Of a bliss beyond our sphere ?  
Without pain would there be pleasure,  
Joy without or hope or fear ?  
Youth and beauty, could they thrall us  
If old age did not appal us ?  
Could we love, if love were clear ?

Life is nought for us, frail mortals,  
But through death whereto we tend ;  
And we cross the heavenly portals  
Only when on earth we bend ;  
Only what we lose, we cherish ;  
Only pluck the flowers that perish ;  
Only what we have not, spend.

This is wisdom : learn to grasp it :  
Kiss the fickle hour that flies :  
If a joy comes, do not clasp it :  
Let the dream above thine eyes  
Wave its wings in ether sailing :  
So shalt thou dwell unbewailing  
Till the sun that sets not, rise.

---

*TAKE HEED AND BEWARE.*

NAY, be not covetous ! what though  
Thou hunger not for land or gold,  
High place among the great to hold,  
Or famous through the crowd to go ;  
Yet art thou covetous, I know.

Thy greed is blent incurably  
With the soul's life ; for thou dost crave  
To bathe in Beauty, wave by wave ;  
Nor wilt thou let one moment be  
Cradled in wise passivity.

Much hast thou had ; yet more and more  
Thou fain wouldst win : the past is dust  
Beneath those fevered feet of lust  
That bear thee to a barren shore,  
Pursuing still what flies before.



Thankless thou art, like one who fed  
With meat and wine, cries Give ! Give ! Give  
Peevish thou art, unlearned to live,  
Lean, impotent, impatient, led  
By lights of wandering passion bred

Fool that thou art ! the stable health  
Begotten of a heart at rest,  
The fervours of a tranquil breast,  
Are not for thee, nor yet the wealth  
That fills the sober mind by stealth.

Then be not covetous ! Although  
The thirst that in thy bosom springs  
For fair and honourable things,  
Seem Virtue's self, yet even so  
Thou art the slave of sin, I know.

---

*A VISTA.*

SAD heart, what will the future bring  
To happier men when we are gone ?  
What golden days shall dawn for them,  
Transcending all we gaze upon ?

Will our long strife be laid at rest,  
The warfare of our blind desires  
Be merged in a perpetual peace,  
And love illumine but harmless fires ?

Shall faith released from forms that chain  
And freeze the spirit while we pray,  
Expect with calm and ardent eyes  
The morning of death's brighter day ?—

These things shall be ! A loftier race  
Than e'er the world hath known, shall rise  
With flame of freedom in their souls  
And light of science in their eyes.

They shall be pure from fraud, and know  
The names of priest and king no more ;  
For them no placeman's hand shall hold  
The balances of peace and war.

They shall be gentle, brave, and strong,  
To spill no drop of blood, but dare  
All that may plant man's lordship firm  
On earth and fire and sea and air.

Nation with nation, land with land,  
Inarmed shall live as comrades free ;  
In every heart and brain shall throb  
The pulse of one fraternity.

They shall be simple in their homes,  
And splendid in their public ways,  
Filling the mansions of the state  
With music and with hymns of praise.

In aisles majestic, halls of pride,  
Groves, gardens, baths, and galleries,  
Manhood and youth and age shall meet  
To grow by converse inly wise.

Woman shall be man's mate and peer  
In all things strong and fair and good,  
Still wearing on her brows the crown  
Of sinless sacred motherhood.

High friendship, hitherto unknown,  
Or by great poets half divined,  
Shall burn, a steadfast star, within  
The calm clear ether of the mind.

Man shall love man with heart as pure  
And fervent as the young-eyed joys  
Who chaunt their heavenly songs before  
God's face with undiscordant noise.

New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,  
And mightier music thrill the skies,  
And every life shall be a song,  
When all the earth is paradise

There shall be no more sin, no shame,  
    Though pain and passion may not die ;  
For man shall be at one with God  
    In bonds of firm necessity.

These things—they are no dream—shall be  
    For happier men when we are gone :  
Those golden days for them shall dawn,  
    Transcending aught we gaze upon.

THE  
VALLEY OF VAIN DESIRES.



## *THE VALLEY OF VAIN DESIRES.*

THERE lurks a chasm, embedded, deep and drear,  
Ringed round with jags and ragged teeth sublime  
Of heights Himâlyan ; where the hills uprear

Their hideous circuit to far snows, and climb  
By barren cliff and scaur and splintered stair  
Funereal. Never since the birth of time

Fell dew upon the valley-basement bare ;  
Nor light of day direct, nor starry spear  
Shot earthward ; but the opaque lurid air,

Unsunned and lustreless, like a salt mere,  
Breeds exhalations. Here the craggy spines,  
Converging from dim summits, build a bier,

Hollow and hateful, merging their sharp lines  
In dismal flatness ; and the floor is scarred  
With seams and furrows : withered roots of pines

Grapple the fleshless granite : pits are barred  
With broken branches, age-old skeletons  
Of what were trees : and, horror ! on the hard

Face of the grey stone skulls that grin, and bones  
That bleach and wither in the windless gloom,  
Dry-rot to dust by bleak battalions.

What hosts are these ? Hounded by what fell doom,  
Lured by what livid glamour, down the walls  
Of this foul cauldron crept they ? Doth the tomb

With plague-fierce phosphorescent festivals  
Entice the languor of their dream-led feet ?  
Or sought they yon pale fruit that ripens and falls

From boughs aerial ? Lo ! how sickly sweet  
The clammy spheres in clusters, green as dates,  
As o'er-ripe plantains blue, in the faint heat

Fester upon that tree that glooms and grates  
Scant twilight with lean branches ! Far or nigh  
In the whole circle of the hills no mates

Frown on its bulk mysterious ; nor doth eye  
Of dragon guard from pirate hands the fruit  
Of its death-damned Hesperides ; but dry

And doleful round the poison-fibred root  
Spring agarics with fleshly shapes obscene.  
Here never wheels the bat nor screech-owls hoot ;

But all is silence ; and no change is seen  
Of noon or night, save when the shivering morn  
Walks forth upon the silver-cinctured screen



Of unapproachable faint peaks forlorn  
Far in the zenith, or an errant star  
Haunts for awhile perchance some glimmering horn.

All winding ways, circling from near or far,  
Dive to this centre ; and upon them all  
Lie wrecks and ruins of remorseless war

Waged against life by one grim cannibal.—  
What place is this, whereof in dreams the dread  
Curdles my soul with spells tyrannical ?

Yea, but I dreamed : and lo ! my feet were led  
Down the slow spirals of those deadly stairs :  
And I too in my inmost spirit bred

Desire of that fell fruit ; and through the lairs  
Of poison-fretted charnels crept, and came,  
With quivering flesh and horror-stiffened hairs,

Beneath those dismal branches. There a flame  
Burned blue about the blossoms ; and I stood,  
And caught the falling juices ; and, though shame

Shook in my shivering pulse, I snuffed the lewd  
Scent of those corpse-cold clusters ; and I fell  
Amid the dying, dead, delirious brood,

Sweltering upon that altar-stone of Hell.—  
What next my dream disclosed, in faltering speech  
And feeble let my parched tongue strive to tell.

Far as these faint and swooning eyes could reach,  
There, lying lapped in loathsomeness, I spied,  
Coming and going, men who yearned ; and each

Knew what his fellow's thin and shuddering side  
Concealed of heart-ache, and of fear, and fire—  
Of fierce forth-stretchings after joys denied,

And horrible, unquenchable desire.  
Each forehead throbbed with fever ; and each eye,  
Gleaming 'neath hollow temples, seemed a pyre

For some slow flame to feed on.    Silently  
They stole adown the craggy stairs, and strained  
Lean hands toward the branches : loathingly,

Yet with a terrible strange longing, gained  
The gangrened fruit, and ate, and, as they chewed,  
Pain that was pleasure filled them.    Then they waned

Even where they stayed ; for that fierce poison brewed  
Despair within their spirit.    Yet, once more,  
Athirst they rose and ate ; till lassitude

Of what the soul loathes and the veins abhor,  
Possessed them, and they perished, and dust grew  
Year after year upon the granite floor.

O ye, whoe'er ye are, that never knew  
The achings of the ague fits of sin !  
Who never from foul founts delusive drew

Flesh-parching poison ; nor leaped lively in  
With open eyes, where lakes of molten brass  
Made a delirious mirage, and the green

Margent of crusted bronze-rust fairer was  
To your strained senses than all delicate  
Dim tresses of the swaying summer grass !—

How can I teach you by what fearful fate  
Foredoomed, dogged downward by what pangs, enticed  
By what pale cravings, lured alike by hate

And love, these guilty things, of God despised,  
Of man rejected, moaning crept beneath  
The treacherous tree, and fed, and cursing Christ,

Dragged the slow torture of plague-stricken breath  
Onward through days or weeks or months or years  
To fade at last in horror-shrouded death ?

Yet such my dream was : and no gentle tears  
Assuaged its anguish : for the founts were quenched  
Of pity by strange loathing and wild fears.

I saw—yea, even now my cheeks are blenched  
With thinking of the sorrow of that sight—  
A youth Phœbean, whose fair brows, entrenched

With scars untimely, bore the branded blight  
Of shame 'neath withered bay-leaves : his long hair,  
Once crisped in curls that mocked the morning light

For lustre, clung dishevelled, sere and rare,  
Around his shuddering shoulders : as he ran,  
His feet upon the grisly granite stair

Dropped dew, wherewith the dusk obsidian  
Blushed into bloodstone ; and so pure and fine  
Was that fierce chrism that, methought, flowers wan

Struggled to spring therefrom, but straight did pine,  
Seeing that nought with life in it might linger  
Beneath those scathing branches serpentine.

A broken lute he held, with crazy finger  
Fumbling the voiceless chords ; and ever sighed  
His inarticulate throat, as though some singer

Divine, Olympian, on his lips had died.—  
What woe was mine to feel that loveliness  
Stretched in the leprous desert by my side !

To know that tender bosoms longed to press  
Those delicate limbs, wherein the life decayed !  
That maiden lips, mid the forsaken bliss

Of peaceful homes, might yesternight have laid  
Pure cooling kisses on those cheeks whereon  
Now fed the poison of the fearful glade !

Let one tale speak for all !—the Upas shone  
Above his glistening eyeballs ; and its scent  
Stank in his nostrils like the carrion

Mid jasmines festering by some Indian tent ;  
So that he loathed and loved it. Then he ate.  
Sleep swallowed shame. But oh ! the ravishment

Of that next waking, ere his eyes were set  
To scan the horrors of the hopeless vale !—  
Beneath his feet thick grass spread dewy wet

(So fancy fooled him) in a pleasant dale ;  
And he, a boy, uprising, fain would go  
Forth to green crofts of golden galingale,

Daylong to muse and watch the murmuring flow  
Of alder-shaded streams—Ah God !—Alas !—  
Tigerlike on his soul the sudden woe

Leapt in one moment of the awful place ;  
And rising—as Eve rose, what time she broke  
The fatal bough—upon his shrivelled face

The fire of Never, Nevermore ! awoke  
Thenceforth to feed undying. Then he turned  
Breast-downward, smitten with sharp throes that shook

The putrid air. Nathless keen fever burned  
Yet in his veins : then he would crawl and lean  
Weak limbs against the trunk :—at times he spurned,

At times he clutched the mellow fruit that green  
And rank bent downward to his panting lip ;  
And ever and anon the heavens serene

Disclosed above his eyes ; and stars would slip  
Through the clear azure on the edge of snow ;  
Or dawning's tremulous pure fingertip

Of rose would glide along the horns, or glow  
A little downward, ever out of reach,  
Delusive, taunting him midmost his woe.

Sweet thoughts swam through him of the leafy beech  
Broad by his father's houseroof, where he played,  
Or spread at eventide with plum and peach

The rustic board, a free child, ere sin laid  
Her loathly finger on his luminous hair.  
In dreams the angel of that old life made

Music most eloquent, till all things fair  
Once more bloomed round him ; yet he might not seize  
The blossom of their beauty : for despair

Shrivelled his spirit with foul phantasies :  
And this of all his torment was the worst,  
That knowing purity and joy and peace,

He might not even yearn for them, accurst  
With the one hunger of the hideous tree.—  
Thus in my dream I watched that devilish thirst

Consume and rot and wreck him utterly,  
Till he too perished.    In what dark abyss  
Of Thy deep counsel dwells the black decree

Whereby, O God, such shapes of blessedness  
Must sink beneath the scurf and barren spume  
Of lust unlovely, loathed and lustreless ?

---

Even as I wailed and wrung wild hands, the gloom  
Lightened, and lo ! around me like thin flowers  
Of clouds that on the brows of sunset bloom,

Blazed angel choirs innumerable—Thrones and Powers,  
Princes, Archangels, flame-tongued Seraphim,  
Shrilling through all their cohort : He is ours !

Then gazing on the ash-white corse of him  
Who 'erewhile sank soul-smitten by fierce pain,  
I saw a little dust, pure, white, and dim ;

Kind earth's true substance. But amid that train  
Flamed one intense keen orb of living light,  
That throbbed and shouted ; and the purple grain

Of heaven grew pale around it—with such white  
Wild radiance pierced its splendour through and through  
The fabric of God's infinite delight.

Therewith the love within my spirit drew  
Me upward with those angels ; yea, I went,  
Last of their choir, through fields of trackless blue :

For faith and hope and yearning in me lent  
Wings to my weakness ; and I heard the singer,  
Divine, Olympian, in free ravishment

Flood the waste skies with living strains, that linger  
Yet in these tingling ears and eager heart.  
No more about his lute the restless finger

Strayed ; for he needed neither hand nor art  
Nor voice nor throat, since joy alone and life  
Made music through his lustre.    Yea, the smart

Of that past passion and all its sinful strife  
Bloomed into bliss triumphant.    Then I turned  
My gaze 'mid stars, wherewith the way was rife,

Downward, and lo ! a little spark that burned,  
Serenely stationed amid sister spheres :  
And is that Earth ? my wistful spirit yearned :

Yea, Earth it is ; but here where neither years,  
Nor place, nor change, nor forms are, but all's One—  
One light, one joy, one life,—thy world appears

E'en what she is, pure splendour !    There was none  
In all that luminous band, but flamed and shed  
Smiles like the arrows of the orient sun,

While from the singer's soul the new lore sped  
Striking my dizzied senses.    Then—for now  
The tents of very heaven disclosed o'erhead,



And scathing glory smote my aching brow—  
Sleep fell apart, and waking I was ware  
How that above me in the golden glow

Of dawning all the Alpine summits fair,  
Unbarred of midnight blackness, row by row  
Blazed in the brilliance of the August air.

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Yea, Lord ! one thing alone of truth we know—  
That Thou art good and gracious ! Could but we  
Behold the rivers of Thy wisdom flow

From the first fount of Thy felicity,  
Through all the ocean where those myriad streams  
Commingle, 'twere an easy task to see  
Concord above the discord of our dreams.



## NOTES.



## NOTES.

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### NOTE 1, PAGE 9.

*Forget me never.*

Suggested by an anonymous epigram in the Greek Anthology, bk. vii. 346.

### NOTE 2, PAGE 35.

*Leuké.*

1. This description of the fabled island of Leuké is from Arrian, who tells the story of the sea-birds. 2. The dream blent Arrian's Leuké with a winter sunset in the high Alps, a well-known study by Flandrin, and a voyage in an open boat from Amalfi to Capri.

### NOTE 3, PAGE 45.

*An Improvisation.*

Suggested by the records of Beethoven's deafness.

### NOTE 4, PAGE 51.

*Hesperus and Hymenæus.*

The first few lines are taken from a fragment of Bion. The Idyll repeats a legend told by Servius in his Virgilian Commentary.

## NOTE 5, PAGE 57.

*The Feet of the Beloved.*

Modelled upon one of Philostratus' Epistles.

## NOTE 6, PAGE 57.

*From Maximus Tyrius.*

These thoughts occur in a Dialogue by Maximus on Love.

## NOTE 7, PAGE 59.

*An Episode.*

An attempt to treat the incident of Socrates' meeting with Phædo.

## NOTE 8, PAGE 60.

*To Rhodocleia.*

Suggested by several of Meleager's epigrams.

## NOTE 9, PAGE 60.

*At Diocles' Tomb.*

See the Scholia to Theocritus, Idyll XII.

## NOTE 10, PAGE 62.

*The Sacrifice.*

The tale of Cratinus and Aristodemus has been told at length by me in *Many Moods*.

## NOTE II, PAGE 63.

*Art is Love.*

I need hardly acknowledge the obligation of this poem to the myth of the Birth of Love in Plato's *Symposium*.

## NOTE 12, PAGE 67.

*Martyrdom.*

See Anth. Pal. xii. 132.

## NOTE 13, PAGE 69.

*Pantarkes.*

Pausanias says that one of the subordinate figures placed, as Victory, beneath the knees of the chryselephantine statue of Zeus, was the portrait of Pantarkes, a youth of Elis beloved by Pheidias.

## NOTE 14, PAGE 77.

*The Love Tale of Odatis.*

This legend, derived probably from some ancient Arabian Nights story-book and Hellenized, is reported from the Histories of Chares the Mitylenean by Athenæus in bk. xiii. ch. 35 of his *Deipnosophistæ*.

## NOTE 15, PAGE 148.

*The Cappuzin.*

A part of the Rosegg glacier opposite Pontresina has this name, because the rocks emergent from the snow form the image of a monk's face, gigantic and lifeless, which, once recognised, will never afterwards be forgotten.

## NOTE 16, PAGE 187.

*Imelda Lambertazzi.*

This story occurs in the mediæval annals of Bologna. Like that of Romeo and Juliet and others of the same date, it connects the political discords of the Guelfs and Ghibellines with a legend of unhappy love. The incident of Imelda's dying by drinking the poisoned blood of her lover's wound, is told by the Chronicler.

## NOTE 17, PAGE 213.

*The Doom of the Slothful.*

See Dante, *Inferno*, canto vii.

## NOTE 18, PAGE 231.

*The Valley of Vain Desires.*

This is an attempt to describe by way of allegory the attraction of vice that 'fascinates and is intolerable,' with its punishment of spiritual extinction or madness in this life. I have often doubted whether the nightmare horror which I tried to adumbrate, is a fit subject for poetic treatment. I content myself, however, by reflecting that the sense or the presentiment of sin, when sternly realised, involves this horror, and that, as it is a frequent phase of spiritual experience, we are not bound to shrink from even its most poignant presentation.



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